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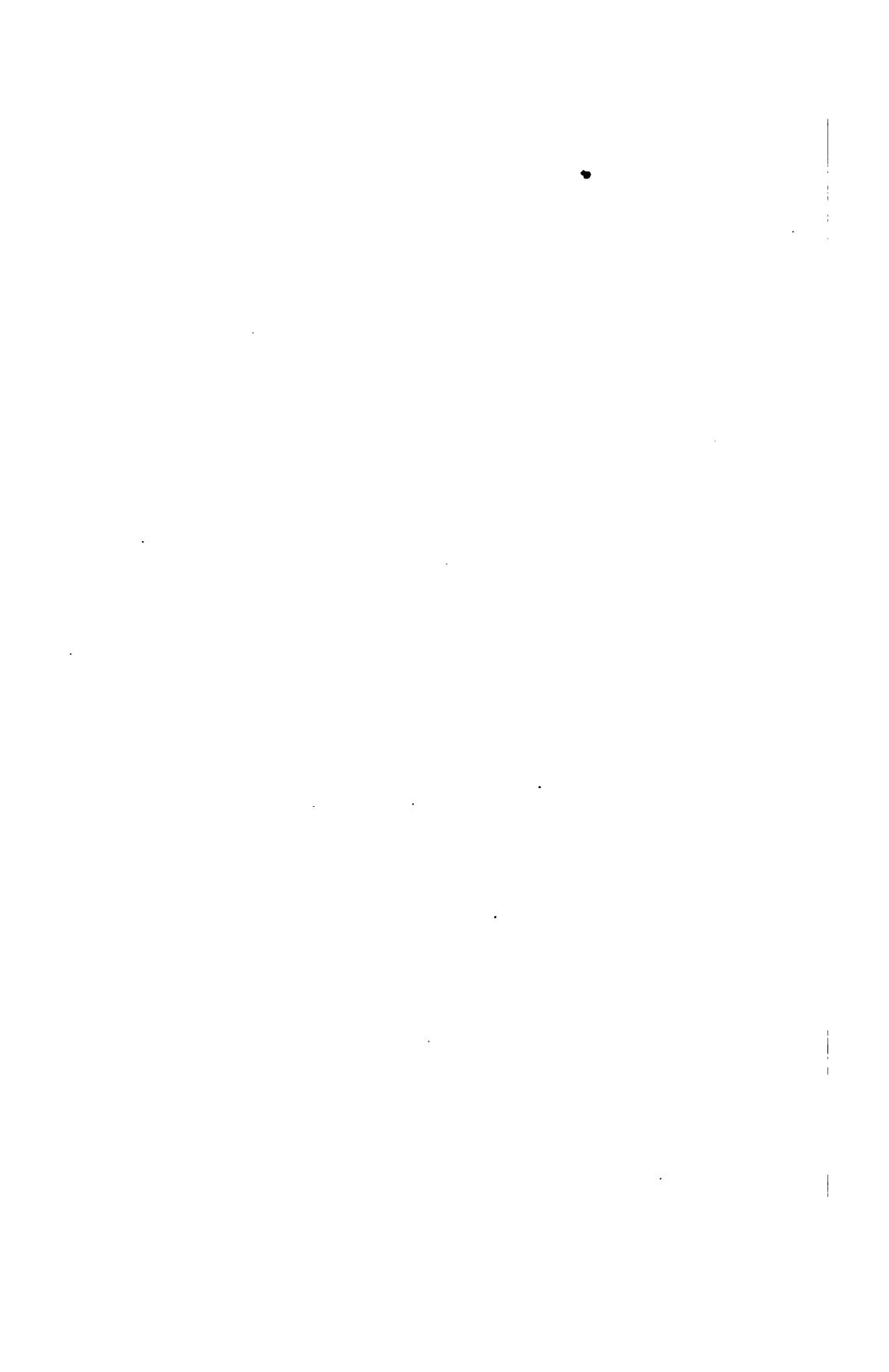
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# SERMONS

PREACHED

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

FEBRUARY, 1837.





# FOUR SERMONS

PREACHED

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,

DURING THE

MONTH OF FEBRUARY,

M.DCCC.XXXVII.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

## TWO SERMONS

PREACHED AT THE EVENING LECTURE,

IN GREAT ST MARY'S CHURCH.

BY

HENRY MELVILL, B.D.

LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR OF ST PETER'S COLLEGE.

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THE publication of the following Sermons was strongly requested by many of those who had heard them delivered. The Author was thus placed under the same circumstances as a year ago, when he had discharged the duties of Select Preacher before the University. He felt that it would not become him to act differently on the two occasions; and he can now only express his earnest hope that discourses, which were listened to with singular kindness and attention, may be perused with some measure of advantage.

CAMBERWELL, *March 4, 1837.*



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# SERMON I.

## THE UNNATURALNESS OF DISOBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL.

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### GALATIANS III. 1.

*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth; before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?*

It is to be observed that the Galatians, here addressed, were not Jews; neither had they been dwellers in Jerusalem, when Christ died upon the cross. It was not therefore true of them, any more than of ourselves, that, with the bodily eye, they had beheld Jesus crucified. If the Saviour had been evidently set forth before the Galatians, sacrificed for sin, it could only have been in the same manner as he is set before us, through the preaching of the word, and the administration of the Sacraments. There was no engine brought to bear on the Galatians, except that of the miracles which the first teachers wrought, which is not also brought to bear upon us; and the miracles were of no avail, except to the making good points on which we profess ourselves already convinced. If therefore the very Gospel, which St



Paul preached he preached in our hearing, and the very Sacraments which he administered be administered in our assemblies, it may be said of us, with as much propriety as of the Galatians, that "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among us."

The greater distance at which we stand from the introduction of Christianity, does not necessarily occasion any greater indistinctness in the exhibition of the Saviour. It was not the proximity of the Galatians to the time of the Crucifixion which caused Christ to appear as though crucified among them; for once let a truth become an object of faith, not of sight, and it must make way by the same process at different times—there may be diversity in the evidence by which it is sustained, there is none in the manner in which it is apprehended.

We may therefore bring down our text to present days, and regard it as applicable, in every part, to ourselves. There are two chief topics which will demand to be handled. You observe that the Apostle speaks of it as so singular, that men should disobey the truth, that he can only ascribe it to sorcery or fascination. You observe also that he grounds this opinion on the fact, that Christianity had been so propounded to these men, that Christ himself might be said to have been crucified among them. We shall invert the order of the text, believing that it may be thus most practically considered. In the first place, it will be our endeavour to shew you, that there is nothing exaggerated in our declaring of yourselves,

that "before your eyes Christ Jesus hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you." In the second place, we shall make this fact a basis on which to ground a question to those who are yet neglectful of the soul, "Who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?"

Now we are bold to claim at once a high character for the ministrations of the Gospel, and shall not attempt to construct a laboured proof of their power. We do not substantiate our claim by any reference to the wisdom or energy of the men by whom these ministrations may be conducted; for Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God alone can give the increase. It is altogether as a divinely instituted ordinance that we uphold the might of preaching, and contend that it may have such power of annihilating time, and reducing the past to present being, as to set Christ evidently before your eyes, crucified among you. We are assured, in regard of the public ministrations of the word, that they are the instituted method by which the events of one age are to be kept fresh through every other. And, on this account, we can have no hesitation in using language with regard to these our weekly assemblies, which would be wholly unwarranted, if we ascribed the worth of preaching, in any degree, to the preacher. When the services of God's house are considered as an instrumentality through which God's Spirit operates, we may safely attribute to those services extraordinary energy.

We say therefore of preaching, that it must be separated as far as possible from the preacher;

for it is only when thus separated, that we can apply to it St Paul's assertion in our text. I might now bring before you a summary of the history of Christ. I might evoke from the past the miracles of Jesus, and bid you look on, as the sick are healed, and the dead raised. I might lead you from scene to scene of his last great struggle with the powers of darkness, and summon you to behold him in the garden, and at the judgment seat, on the cross and in the grave. And then, as though we were actually standing, as stood the Israelites, when the fiery serpents were abroad, round the cross which sustained that to which we must look for deliverance, might I entreat you, by the hopes and fears which center in Eternity, to gaze on the Lamb of God as the alone propitiation for sin. This I might do; and this has been often done from this place. And shall we hesitate to affirm, that, whensoever this is done, Jesus Christ is "set forth, crucified among you?" It is not that we can pretend to throw surpassing vividness into our representations. It is not that we can claim such power of delineation as shall renovate the past, and cause it to re-appear as a present occurrence. It is not, that, by any figure of speech, or any hold on your imaginations, we can summon back what has long ago departed, and fix it in the midst of you visibly and palpably. It is only, that, as Intercession has been appointed to perpetuate the Crucifixion of Christ—so that, as our Advocate with "the Father, he has continually that sacrifice to present, which he offered once for all upon Calvary—so

has preaching been appointed to preserve the memory of that death which achieved our Redemption, and keep the mighty deed from growing old.

The virtue therefore which we ascribe to our public discourses, is derived exclusively from their constituting an ordained instrumentality; and our confidence that the virtue will not be found wanting, flows only from a conviction that an instrumentality, once ordained, will be duly honoured, by God. We believe assuredly that there is at work, in this very place, and at this very moment, an agency independent of all human, but which is accustomed to make itself felt through finite and weak instruments. As the words flow from the lips of him who addresses you, flow apparently in the unaided strength of mere earthly speech, they may be endowed by this agency with an energy which is wholly from above, and thus prevail to the setting Christianity before you, with as clear evidence as was granted to those who saw Jesus in the flesh. So that, if there were nothing entrusted to us but the preaching of the word, if we had no Sacraments to administer, we should feel, that, without presumption, we might declare of our hearers what St Paul declared of the Christians at Galatia. Yea, so deep is our persuasion of our living under the dispensation of the Spirit, and of preaching being the chief engine which this Spirit employs in transmitting a knowledge of Redemption, that, after every endeavour, however feeble and inadequate, to bring under men's view "the mystery of godliness," we

feel that practically as much is done for them as though they had been spectators of Christ's expiatory sufferings; and therefore could we boldly wind up every such endeavour, by addressing our auditors as individuals, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among them."

But you are to add to this, that not only is there the preaching of the Gospel in our churches; there is also the administration of Sacraments. We will confine ourselves to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as furnishing the more forcible illustration. It is said by St Paul, in reference to this Sacrament, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come"—an explicit assertion that there is in the Lord's Supper such a manifestation of the crucifixion of Jesus, as will serve to set forth that event until his second appearing. And we scarcely need tell you, that, inasmuch as the bread and the wine represent the body and blood of the Saviour, the administration of this Sacrament is so commemorative of Christ's having been offered as a sacrifice, that we seem to have before us the awful and mysterious transaction, as though again were the cross reared, and the words "It is finished" pronounced in our hearing. We have here the representation by significative action, just as, in the case of preaching, by authoritative announcement. For no man can partake of this Sacrament, with his spiritual sensibilities in free exercise, and not seem to himself to be traversing the garden and the mount,

consecrated by a Mediator's agony, whilst they witness the fearful struggles through which was effected our reconciliation to God.

And if we attach weight to the opinion of the Church in her best days, we must hold that there is actually a sacrifice in the Eucharist, though of course not such as the Papists pretend. Christ is offered in this Sacrament, but only commemoratively. Yet the commemoration is not a bare remembering, or putting ourselves in mind; it is strictly a commemoration made to God the Father. As Christ, by presenting his death and satisfaction to his Father, continually intercedes for us in Heaven, so the Church on earth, when celebrating the Eucharist, approaches the throne of grace by representing Christ unto his Father in the holy mysteries of his death and passion\*.

From the beginning it has been always the same awfully solemn rite, which might have attested and taught Christianity, had every written record perished from the earth. All along it has been the Gospel preached by action, a phenomenon of which you could give no account, except by admitting the chief facts of the New Testament history, and which might, in a great degree, have preserved a knowledge of those facts, had they never been registered by Evangelists. It is like a pillar erected in the waste of centuries, indelibly inscribed with memorials of our faith; or rather, it is as the cross itself, presenting to all eyes the immolation of that victim who "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." And so

\* See Mede on Malachi, i. 11.

long as this Sacrament is administered in our churches, men shall never be able to plead that there are presented to them none but weak and ineffective exhibitions of Christ. If the Crucifixion be not vivid, as delineated from the pulpit, it must be vivid as delineated from the altar. And it is nothing that hundreds absent themselves from the great celebration, and thus never witness the representation of the Crucifixion. They are invited to that celebration, they are perfectly aware of its nature, and their remaining away can do nothing towards lessening its solemnities, and stripping it of energy as an exhibition of Christ's death. And whilst men are members of a Church in whose ordinances the Lord's death is continually shewn forth, we can be bold to address them, whether they neglect or whether they partake of those ordinances, in the very terms in which St Paul addressed the Galatians of old. Yes, whatever our infirmities and deficiencies as preachers of the everlasting Gospel, we take high ground as entrusted with dispensing the Sacrament of the Eucharist: and whilst we have to deliver the bread of which Christ said, "Take, eat, this is my body," and the cup of which he declared "this is my blood of the New Testament," we may look an assembly confidently in the face, and affirm that there are proffered them such exhibitions of the sacrifice of the Mediator, that Jesus Christ is evidently set forth before their eyes, crucified among them.

But we have now, in the second place, to assume that the facts of the Gospel are thus

brought vividly before you, and to infer from it that disobedience to the truth can only be ascribed to fascination or witchcraft. The question, "Who hath bewitched you?" indicates the persuasion of the Apostle, that the Gospel of the Crucifixion was eminently adapted to make way upon earth. And this is a point which perhaps scarcely receives its due share of attention. We know so well that there is practically a kind of antipathy between the doctrines of Christianity and the human heart, that, whilst we admit the necessity of a supernatural influence to procure them reception, we never think of referring to sorcery to explain their rejection. It seems so natural to us to disobey the truth, however clearly and forcibly propounded, that, when disobedience is to be accounted for, there appears no need for the calling in witchcraft.

Yet there is, we believe, a mistake in this, and one calculated to bring discredit on the Gospel. If you represent it as a thing quite to be expected, that men would disobey the Gospel—just as though the Gospel were so constructed as to be necessarily repulsive—you invest it with a character at variance with the wisdom of its author; for you declare of the means, that they are not adapted to the end which is proposed. And we wish to maintain, that, situated as fallen men are, the Gospel of the Crucifixion adapts itself so accurately to their wants, and addresses itself so powerfully to their feelings, that their rejection of it is a mystery, in the explaining of which we are forced to have recourse to the



witch's fascinations. We reckon that the great truth of Christianity, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" for its rescue, is so fitted for overcoming the obstinacy, and melting the hearts of humankind, that it must be matter of amazement to higher orders of intelligence, that it should be heard with indifference, or rejected with scorn. Angels, pondering a fact which appears to them more surprising than the humiliation and death of the everlasting Word—the fact that redeemed creatures reject their Redeemer—may propose amongst themselves the very question of our text, "who hath bewitched them that they should not obey the truth?"

We shall not include in our investigations into the fairness of this question the case of the open infidel, who professedly disbelieves the whole of Christianity. We omit this case, not because we think that it is not to be accounted for as the result of some species of fascination, but only because it is not one of those directly intended by St Paul. As to the fascination or witchcraft, it scarce admits debate. For we can never allow, that, where reason has fair play, and the intellect is permitted to sit in calm judgment on the proofs to which Christianity appeals, there will be ought else but a verdict in favour of the divine origin of our religion. So mighty are the evidences on which the faith rests, that, where there is candour in the enquirer, belief must be the issue of the enquiry. And where-soever there is a different result, we can be

certain that there has been some fatal bias on the reasoning faculties; and that, whether it have been the sorcery of his own passions, or of "the Prince of the power of the air," the man has been as verily spell-bound throughout his investigations, as though, with Saul, he had gone down to the cave of the enchantress, and yielded himself to her unhallowed dominion.

But we pass by this case, and come at once to the considering, whether the Gospel of Christ be not admirably calculated for making way to the conscience and the heart, so that the marvel is not that it should here and there win a convert, but rather that it does not meet with universal success.

Let it, first, be observed with how surpassing an energy this Gospel appeals to the fears of mankind. We say, to the fears—for it were indeed to take a contracted view of Christianity, to survey it as proffering mercy, and to overlook its demonstrations of wrath. If Jesus Christ have been "evidently set forth, crucified among you," there has been exhibited to you so stern a manifestation of God's hatred of sin, that, if you can still live in violation of his laws, some fascinating power must have made you reckless of consequences. There is this marvellous combination in the Gospel scheme, that we cannot preach of pardon without preaching of judgment. Every homily as to how sinners may be forgiven, is equally a homily as to the fearfulness of their doom, if they continue impenitent. We speak to men of Christ as bearing their "sins

in his own body on the tree," and the speech seems to breathe nothing but unmeasured loving-kindness. Yet who, on hearing it, can repress the thoughts, what must sin be, if no finite being could make atonement; what must its curse be, if Deity alone could exhaust it? And yet, with the great mass of men, this appeal to their fears is wholly ineffectual. Is it that the appeal is not sufficiently energetic? is it that it is not framed into such shape as to be adapted to beings with the passions and feelings of men? Is it that there is nothing in our nature, which responds to a warning and summons thus constructed and conveyed? We cannot admit the explanation. The Crucifixion is a proclamation, than which there cannot be imagined a clearer and more thrilling, that an eternity of inconceivable wretchedness will be awarded to all who continue in sin. And yet men do continue in sin. The proclamation is practically as powerless as though it were the threat of an infant or an idiot. And we are bold to say of this, that it is unnatural. Men have the flesh which can quiver, and the hearts which can quake; and we call it unnatural, that there should be no trembling, and no misgiving, when the wrath of the Almighty is being opened before them, and directed against them.

And if unnatural, what account can we give of their disobeying the truth? Oh, there have been brought to bear on them the arts of fascination and sorcery. I know not, in each particular case, what hath woven the spell, and breathed the

incantation. But there must have been some species of moral witchcraft, by which they have been steeled against impressions which would otherwise have been necessarily produced. Has the magician been with them, who presides over the gold and the silver, and persuaded them that wealth is so precious that it should be amassed at all risks? Has the enchantress who mingles the wine-cup, and wreathes the dance, been with them, beguiling them with the music of her blandishments, and assuring them that the pleasures of the world are worth every penalty they incur? Has the wizard, who, by the circlings of his wand, can cause the glories of empire to pass before men's view, as they passed, in mysterious but magnificent phantoms, before that of Christ in his hour of temptation, been with them, cajoling them with dreams of honour and distinction, till he have made them reckless of everlasting infamy? We say again, we know not what the enchantment may have been. We know not the draught by whose fumes men have been stupified, nor the voice by whose tones they have been infatuated. But we know so thoroughly that the Gospel, published in their hearing, is exactly adapted for the acting on their fears, for the filling them with dread, and moving them to energy, that, when we behold them indifferent to the high things of futurity, and yet remember that "Christ Jesus hath been evidently set forth, crucified among them," we can but resolve the phenomenon into some species or another of magical delusion; we can but ply them with the

question, "who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?"

But it is saying little, to say that the Gospel addresses itself to the fears of mankind; it is equally adapted for acting on feelings of a gentler and more generous description. The effect of the fall was not to banish from man's breast "whatsoever things are lovely and of good report;" but rather—and this is far more melancholy, as proving alienation from God—that, whilst there can yet be the play of fine and noble emotions between man and man, there is nothing of the kind from man towards his Maker.

Those sympathies, which are readily called into exercise by the kindness and disinterestedness of a fellow-creature, seem incapable of responding to the love and compassion of our benevolent Creator. That statue, so famed in antiquity, which breathed melody only when gilded by the sunbeams, was just the opposite to man in his exile and alienation. No lesser rays, whether from the moon or stars, could wake the music that was sepulchred in the stone. The sun must come forth, "as a giant to run his race," and then the statue responded to his shinings, and hymned his praises. But not so with man. The lesser rays can wake some melody, The claims of country, or of kindred, can excite him to correspondent duties. But the sun shineth upon him in vain. The claims of God call forth no devotedness: and the stone, which can discourse musically in answer to the glimmerings of philosophy, and the glow of friendship, is silent as the grave to the Revelation of God and his Christ.

We declare of the Gospel, that it addresses itself directly to those feelings, which, for the most part, are instantly wakened by kindness and beneficence. Take away the divinity from this Gospel, reduce it into a record of what one man hath done for others, and it relates a generous interposition, whose objects, if they evinced no gratitude, would be denounced as disgracing humanity. If it be true that we naturally entertain sentiments of the warmest affection towards those who have done, or suffered, some great thing on our behalf, it would seem quite to be expected that such sentiments would be called into most vigorous exercise by the Mediator's work. If in a day when pestilence was abroad on the earth, and men dreaded its entrance into their households, we could carry them to a bed on which lay one racked by the terrible malady; and tell them that this individual had voluntarily taken the fearful infection, and was going down in agony to the grave, because complying, of his own choice, with a mysterious decree which assured him, that, if he would thus suffer, the disease should have no power over their families—is it credible that they would look on the dying man with indifference; or that, as they hearkened to his last requests, they would feel other than a resolve to undertake, as the most sacred of duties, the fulfilling the injunctions of one who, by so costly a sacrifice, warded off the evil with which they were threatened? And yet, what would this be, compared with our leading them to the scene of Crucifixion, and shewing

them the Redeemer dying in their stead? You cannot say, that, if the sufferer on his death-bed would be a spectacle to excite emotions of gratitude, and resolutions of obedience, the spectacle of Christ on the cross might be expected to be surveyed with carelessness and coldness. Yet such is undeniably the fact. The result which would naturally be produced is not produced. Men would naturally feel gratitude, but they do not feel gratitude. They would naturally be softened into love and submission, and they manifest only insensibility and hard-heartedness.

And what are we to say to this? Here are beings who are capable of certain feelings, and who shew nothing of those feelings when there is most to excite them; beings who can display love to every friend but their best, and gratitude to every benefactor but their greatest. Oh, we say—and it is the unnaturalness of the exhibition which forces us to say—that enchantment has been at work, stealing away the senses, and deadening the feelings. In all other cases the heart has free play; but in this it is trammelled, as by some magical cords, and cannot beat generously. Satan, the great deceiver, who seduced the first of humankind, has been busy with one sort or another of illusion, and has so bound men with his spells that they are morally entranced. We know not, as we said in the former case, what may have been the stupifying charm, or the coercive incantation. We have not gone down with them to the haunts of the Sorcerer, that we might know by what rites

they have thus been unhumanized. But they would never be indifferent where there is most to excite, and insensible where there is all that can tell upon their feelings, if they had not surrendered the soul to some power of darkness, some beguiling and o'ermastering passion, some agency which, like that pretended to by the woman of Endor, professes to give life to the dead. And therefore remembering, that, as grafted into the Christian Church, they are men "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among them," we cannot see them manifesting no love to the Saviour, and yielding him no allegiance, without feeling that this their vehement ingratitude is wholly unnatural, and without therefore pressing home upon them the question, "Who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?"

We may certainly add, that, as addressing itself to men's hopes, the Gospel is so calculated for making and retaining disciples, that nothing but the workings of sorcery will explain its rejection. It must be remembered that Christ, as Mediator, not only gained our pardon, but procured for us everlasting happiness. And if we must judge the immenseness of the escaped punishment, we must judge also that of the proffered glory, by the fact that our substitute was none other than a person of the Trinity. If Christ Jesus is set before men, crucified among them, they are manifestly taught, that, as the price paid is not to be computed, neither is the happiness of which it was the purchase. And



they are beings keenly alive to their own interests, readily excited by any prospect of good, and who exhibit the greatest alacrity and vigour in pursuing such plans as promise them advantage. It is moreover their natural constitution, to forego a present for a future and far greater good, and to submit cheerfully to privations, in hopes of receiving what shall be more than equivalent. We call this their natural constitution; and we therefore, further, call it unnatural, and demonstrative of strange and sinister influence, that they should choose the trifling in preference to the unmeasured, and give up the everlasting for the sake of the transient. Yet this men do when they disobey the Gospel. The Gospel addresses itself directly to their desire after happiness. It makes its appeal to that principle in their nature, which prompts them to provide for the future at the expense of the present. In every other case they hearken to such address, and respond to such appeal. But in this case, which differs from every other only in the incalculable superiority of the proffered good, they turn a deaf ear, and wear all the appearance of a natural incapacity of being stirred by such an engine as the Gospel brings to bear.

What account shall we give of this? A principle of their nature is in full vigour, except in the instance in which there is most to excite it, and then it seems utterly extinguished. They can pursue a future good, unless it be infinite, and be moved by any prospect of happiness, except of everlasting. There must have been sorcery here,

and we have no difficulty in determining how the magician has worked. The devil has practised that jugglery which causes the objects of faith to shrink into insignificance, and those of sense to dilate into magnitude. There has been the weaving of that spell which circumscribes the view, so that, though a man can look forward, he never looks beyond the grave. There has been the drinking of that cup of voluptuousness, of which whosoever partakes is maddened into longing for yet deeper draughts. It is sorcery, it is witchcraft. Men would not hesitate, if an earthly good were to be secured on the conditions of the Gospel; and they refuse, when the good is heavenly, only because they have suffered themselves to be beguiled and cheated and entranced. There is a charm upon them, and their own passions have sealed it, binding them to love the world, and the things that are in the world. There is an enchanted circle, which their indulged lusts have traced, and within which they walk, so that they cannot expatiate over the vast spreadings of their existence. There is a syren voice, and their own wishes syllable its whispers, telling them there is no cause for haste, but that hereafter it will be soon enough to attend to Eternity. And thus there is no defect in the Gospel. It is adapted, with the nicest precision, to creatures so constituted as ourselves. But we live in the midst of gorgeous deceits, and brilliant meteors. The wizard's skill, and the necromancer's art, are busied with hiding from us what we most need to know; and our eyes are dazzled by the splendid apparitions with which the god of this world

peoples his domain; and our ears are fascinated by the melodies in which pleasure breathes her incantations; and thus it comes to pass, that we are verily "bewitched" into disobeying the truth.

Would to God that we might all strive to break away from the seductions and flatteries of earth, and give ourselves in good earnest to the seeking happiness in Heaven. And what is it that we ask of men, when we entreat them to escape from the magician, and live for Eternity? Is it that they should be less intellectual, less philosophical? On the contrary, religion is the nurse of intellect, and philosophy is most noble when doing homage to Revelation. It is not intellectual to live only for this world, it is not philosophical to remain ignorant of God. Is it that they should surrender their pleasures, and walk a round of unvaried mortification? We ask them to surrender nothing which a rational being can approve, or an immortal vindicate. We leave them every pleasure which can be enjoyed without a blush, and remembered without remorse. We ask only that they would flee those vices whose end is death, cultivate those virtues which are as much the happiness as the ornament of man, and propose to themselves an object commensurate with their capacities. This, let them be assured, is practical Christianity—to shun what, even as men, they should avoid, and pursue what, even as men, they should desire.

Shall we not then beseech the Almighty, that we may have strength to break the spell, and dissolve the illusion? The Philistines are upon

us, as upon Sampson, and we are yet, it may be, in the lap of the enchantress. But all strength is not gone. The Spirit of the living God may yet be entreated; and the razor of divine judgment hath not swept off the seven locks wherein our might lies. And therefore, however bewitched, each amongst us may yet struggle with the sorcerer who has bound him; and we can assure him that there is such efficacy in hearty prayer to the Lord, that, if he cry for deliverance, the green withs shall be "as tow when it toucheth the fire," and the new cords be broken, like a thread, from his arms.

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## SERMON II.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

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JOB XXXV. 10.

*But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth  
songs in the night?*

IN regard of the concerns and occurrences of life, some men are always disposed to look at the bright side, and others at the dark. The tempers and feelings of some are so cheerful and elastic, that it is hardly within the power of ordinary circumstances to depress and overbear them; whilst others, on the contrary, are of so gloomy a temperament, that the least of what is adverse serves to confound them. But if we can divide men into these classes, when reference is had simply to their private affairs, we doubt whether the same division will hold, we are sure it will not in the same proportion, when the reference is generally to God's dealings with our race. In regard of these dealings, there is an almost universal disposition to the looking on the dark side, and not on the bright; as though there were cause for nothing but wonder, that a God of infinite

love should permit so much misery in any section of his intelligent Creation. You find but few who are ready to observe what provision has been made for human happiness, and what capacities there are yet in the world, notwithstanding its vast disorganization, of ministering to the satisfaction of such as prefer righteousness to wickedness.

Now we cannot deny, that, if we merely regard the earth as it is, the exhibition is one whose darkness it is scarcely possible to overcharge. But when you seek to gather from the condition of the world the character of its Governor, you are bound to consider, not what the world is, but what it would be, if 'all, which that Governor hath done on its behalf, were allowed to produce its legitimate effect. And we are sure, that, when you set yourselves to compute the amount of what may be called unavoidable misery—that misery which must equally remain, if Christianity possessed unlimited sway—you would find no cause for wonder, that God has left the earth burdened with so great a weight of sorrow, but only of praise, that he has provided so amply for the happiness of the fallen.

The greatest portion of the misery which is so pathetically bewailed, exists in spite, as it were, of God's benevolent arrangements, and would be avoided, if men were not bent on choosing the evil, and rejecting the good. And even the unavoidable misery is so mitigated by the provisions of Christianity, that, if there were nothing else to be borne, the pressure would not be heavier than just sufficed for the ends of moral discipline.

There must be sorrow on the earth, so long as there is death; but, if this were all, the certain hope of resurrection and immortality would dry every tear, or cause, at least, triumph so to blend with lamentation that the mourner would be almost lost in the believer. Thus it is true, both of those causes of unhappiness which would remain, if Christianity were universally prevalent, and of those for whose removal this religion was intended and adapted, that they offer no argument against the compassions of God. The attentive observer may easily satisfy himself, that, though for wise ends a certain portion of suffering has been made unavoidable, the divine dealings with man are, in the largest sense, those of tenderness and love, so that, if the great majority of our race were not determined to be wretched, enough has been done to insure their being happy. And when we come to give the reasons, why so vast an accumulation of wretchedness is to be found in every district of the globe, we cannot assign the will and appointment of God: we charge the whole on man's forgetfulness of God, on his contempt or neglect of remedies and assuagements divinely provided; yea, we offer in explanation the words of our text, "none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?"

We shall not stay to trace the connection between these words and the preceding, but rather separate at once the text from the context. We may then consider it as giving a beautiful character of God, which should attract men towards Him, and which is sufficient pledge, that, if it

did, they would be happy even in the midst of adversity. Or we may regard the words, when thus taken by themselves, as expressive of the inexcusableness of men in neglecting God, when he has revealed himself under a character the most adapted to the fixing their confidence. It is evident that Elihu represents it as a most strange and criminal thing, that, though our Maker giveth songs in the night, he is not enquired after by those on whom calamity presses. We may, therefore, divide what we have to say on our text under two general heads; considering, in the first place, what an aggravation it is of the guilt of men's forgetting their Creator, that he is a God "who giveth songs in the night"; and shewing you, in the second place, with how great truth and fitness this touching description may be applied to our Maker.

Now we must all be conscious, that, if pain and suffering were removed from the world, a great portion of the Bible would become quite inapplicable; for on almost its every page there are sayings which would seem out of place, if addressed to beings inaccessible to grief. And it is one beautiful instance of the adaptation of Revelation to our circumstances, that the main thing which it labours to set forth is the love of our Maker. There are many untouched points on which curiosity craves information, and on which Apostles and Prophets might have been commissioned to pour a tide of illustration. But there is no point on which it was so important to us to be certified, as on this of God's love towards



us, notwithstanding our alienation. We emphatically needed a Revelation to assure us of this ; for Natural Theology, whatever its success in delineating the attributes of God, could never have proved that sin had not excluded us from all share in his favour.

And accordingly it is at this that the Bible labours ; and thereby it becomes most truly the Bible of the fallen. A Revelation of God to a rank of beings untainted by sin, would probably not be much occupied with affirming and exhibiting the divine love. There must be guilt, and therefore some measure of consciousness of exposure to wrath, ere there can be doubt as to whether the work of God's hands be still the object of his favour. The Bible therefore, if we may thus speak, of an order of angels, might contain nothing but gorgeous descriptions of divine supremacy and magnificence, opening the mightiest mysteries, but having no reference to the tenderness of a Father, which was always experienced, and none to the forgiveness of sinners, which was never required. But such a Bible would be as much out of place on this fallen Creation, as our's in a sphere where all was purity and light. The Revelation, which alone can profit us, must be a Revelation of mercy, a Revelation which brings God before us as not made irreconcilable by our many offences ; a Revelation, in short, which discloses such arrangements for our restoration to favour, that there could be a night on which Cherubim and Seraphim lined our firmament, chaunting the chorus, " peace on earth, good-will towards man," and thus proving

of our Maker, that he is a God "who giveth songs in the night."

Now you all know that this is the character of the Revelation with which we have been favoured. Independently on the great fact with which the Bible is occupied, the fact of our Redemption through the suretyship of a Mediator, the inspired writers are continually affirming, or insisting upon proofs, that the Almighty loves the human race with a love that passeth knowledge; and they give us, in his name, the most animating promises, promises whose full lustre cannot be discerned in the sunshine, but only when the sky is overcast with clouds. We must, for example, be ourselves brought to the very dust, ere we can rightly estimate this exquisite description of a being, who made the stars, and holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hand, "God, that comforteth those that are cast down." We must know for ourselves the agony, the humiliation, of unforeseen grief, ere we can taste the sweetness of the promise, that God, he who hath "spread out the heavens like a curtain," and ordereth the motions of all the systems of a crowded immensity, "shall wipe away tears from off all faces."

But if God have thus revealed himself in the manner most adapted to the circumstances of the suffering, does not the character of the Revelation vastly aggravate the sinfulness of those by whom God is not sought? Let all ponder the simple truth, that the having in their hands a Bible, which wondrously exhibits the tenderness of Deity,

will leave us without excuse, if not found at last at peace with our Maker. For we are not naturally inaccessible to kindness. We are so constituted that a word of sympathy, when we are in trouble, goes at once to the heart, and even the look of compassion acts as a cordial, and excites grateful feelings. We have only to be brought into circumstances of pain and perplexity, and immediately we shew ourselves acutely sensitive to the voice of consolation; and any of our fellow-creatures has only to approach us in the character of a comforter, and we feel ourselves drawn out towards the benevolent being, and give him at once our thankfulness and friendship. But it is not thus with reference to God. God comes to us in the hour of anxiety, bidding us cast all our care upon Him; but we look round for another resting-place. He comes to us in the season of affliction, offering us the oil and wine of heavenly consolation; but we hew out for ourselves "broken cisterns." He approaches in the moment of danger, proffering us refuge and succour; but we trust in our own strength, or seek help from those who are weak as ourselves. But let us be well assured that this single circumstance, that God hath revealed himself as a Comforter, to those whose condition makes them need comfort, will prove us inexcusable, if we die without giving him the heart's best affections. He acts upon us in the manner in which, both from our necessities and our susceptibilities, there is the greatest likelihood of our being moved to the making him the prime object of our love. And if, notwithstanding, we

prefer the creature to the Creator, what shall we have to urge, when He, who now deals with us in mercy, begins to deal with us in vengeance? Yes, it is not the manifestation of majesty, nor of power, nor of awfulness, which will leave us inexcusable; it is the manifestation of compassion, of good will, of tenderness. A fallen and unhappy creature, harassed by a thousand griefs, and exposed to a thousand perils, might have shrunk from exhibitions of Deity on his throne of clouds, and in his robes of light. He might have pleaded that there was every thing to confound, and nothing to encourage him. But what can he say, when the exhibitions are of God, as making all the bed of the sick man in his sickness, and cheering the widow in her desolateness, and supplying the beggar in his poverty, and guarding the outcast in his exile? Are not these exhibitions touching enough, thrilling enough, encouraging enough? Oh, I might perhaps have felt that it was not to prove the human race necessarily inexcusable in their forgetfulness of God, to say, none saith, where is God my Maker who is "from everlasting and to everlasting," who "sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers," who "tellethe the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names"—but I feel that it is to express such a wilful hard-heartedness as must demand and justify the severest condemnation, to say, "none saith, where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?"

But we now proceed to the shewing you, as we proposed in the second place, with how

great truth and fitness this touching description may be applied to our Maker.

We have already referred to the precise adaptation of the Bible to our circumstances, and we would now examine this adaptation with a little more attention. We may assert that there cannot be imagined, much less found, the darkness, in passing through which there is no promise of Scripture by which you may be cheered. We care not what it is which hath woven the darkness; we are sure that God has made provision for his people's exulting, rather than lamenting, as the gloom gathers round them, and settles over them. Whatever be the nature of the afflictions with which any man has been visited, can he deny, if indeed he be one who has received Christ into the soul, that he has found "a word in season" in Scripture; will he not, at the least, confess, that, if he have passed through the period of calamity without experiencing such consolations as filled him with gratitude, it has been through his own fault and faithlessness, seeing that even "the vale of Baca" can be used by the righteous "as a well?"

Let us take the case of most frequent occurrence, but of which frequency diminishes nothing of the bitterness. We mean the case of the loss of friends, the case in which death makes way into a family, and carries off one of the most beloved of its members. It is night, deep night, in a household, whensoever this occurs. When the loss is of another kind, it may admit of repair. Property may be injured, some cherished

plan may be frustrated—but industry may be again successful, and hope may fix its eye on other objects. But when those whom we love best die, there is no comfort of this sort with which we can be comforted. For a time, at least, the loss seems irreparable; so that, though the wounded sensibilities may afterwards be healed, and even turn to the living as they turned to the dead, yet, whilst the calamity is fresh, we repulse, as injurious, the thought that the void in our affections can ever be filled, and are persuaded that the blank in the domestic groupe can be occupied by nothing but the hallowed memory of the buried. It is therefore night in the household, darkness, a darkness that may be felt. And philosophy comes in, with its well meant, but idle, endeavours to console those who sit in this darkness. It can speak of the unavoidableness of death, of the duty of bearing with manly fortitude what cannot be escaped, of the injuriousness of excessive grief; and it may even hazard a conjecture of reunion in some world beyond the grave. And pleasure approaches with its allurements and fascinations, offering to cheat the mind into forgetfulness, and wile the heart from its sadness. But neither philosophy nor pleasure can avail any thing in the chamber of death—the taper of the one is too faint for so oppressive a gloom, and the torch of the other burns sickly in so unwonted an atmosphere. Is then the darkness such that those whom it envelopes are incapable of being comforted? Oh, not so. There may be those amongst yourselves who can testify, that, even

in a night so dreary and desolate, there is a source whence consolation may be drawn. The promises of Scripture are never more strikingly fulfilled than when death has made an inroad, and taken away, at a stroke, some object of deep love. Indeed it is God's own word to the believer, "I will be with him in trouble"—as though that presence, which can never be withdrawn, then became more real and intense.

What are we to say of cases which continually present themselves to the Parochial Minister? He enters a house, whose darkened windows proclaim that one of its inmates is stretched out a corpse. He finds that it is the fairest and dearest whom death has made his prey, and that the blow has fallen where sure to be most deeply felt. And he is prepared for the burst of bitter sorrow. He knows that the heart, when most purified by grace, is made of feeling stuff; for grace, which removes the heart of stone, and substitutes that of flesh, will refine, rather than extinguish, human sensibilities. But what words does he hear from lips, whence nothing but lamentation might have been expected to issue? "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." The mother will rise up from the side of her pale still child; and though on the cheek of that child (alas, never again to be warm with affection) there are tears which shew how a parent's grief has overflowed, she will break into the exclamation of the Psalmist, "I will sing of mercy and judgment, unto thee, O Lord, will I sing." And

when, a few days after, the slow windings of the funeral procession are seen, and the Minister advances to meet the train, and pours forth the rich and inspiriting words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live"—is it only the low murmur of suppressed anguish by which he is answered? can he not feel that there are those in the groupe whose hearts bound at the magnificent announcement? and, as he looks at the mourners, does he not gather, from the uplifted eye, and the moving lip, that there is one at least who is triumphing in the fulfilment of the prediction, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction?"

And what are we to say to these things? what but that, in the deepest moral darkness, there can be music, music which sounds softer and sweeter than by day; and that, when the instruments of human melody are broken, there is a hand which can sweep the heartstrings, and wake the notes of praise? Yes, philosophy can communicate no comfort to the afflicted: it may enter where all is night; but it leaves what it found, even weeping and wailing. And pleasure may take the lyre, whose strains have often seduced and enchanted; but the worn and wearied spirit has no ear, in the gloom, for what sounded magically, when a thousand lights were blazing. But religion, faith in the promises of that God, who is the husband of the widow, and the Father of the fatherless, this can cause the sorrowing to be glad in the midst of their



sorrow; for it is a description which every believer will confess borne out by experience, that God our Maker "giveth songs in the night."

But again—how beautifully accurate is this description, if referred generally to God's spiritual dealings with our race. It may well be said, that, so soon as man had fallen, it was night on this Creation. The creature had shut itself out from the favour of the Creator; and what was this but to shroud the globe with the worst of all darkness? It was a darkness which no efforts of the human mind have been able to disperse. There is a point up to which Natural Theology has advanced, but which it has never passed. It has discovered a want, but not a supply; it has detected a disease, but not its remedy. We do not perhaps need the written word, in order to our ascertaining that we are exposed to God's wrath. The remonstrances and forebodings of conscience are, in themselves, sufficient to excite in us a belief and dread of judgment to come, and perhaps to extort from us the enquiry, "what must I do to be saved?" But the answer to this enquiry can be furnished only by a higher and deeper than Natural Theology. We make some way by groping in the darkness, but cannot emerge into the light.

But, God be thanked, man was not left to complain, and lament, in the midst of that darkness which his apostacy wove. There were provisions for his rescue, which came into force at the moment of transgression. No sooner had

man fallen than Prophecy, in the form of a promise, took the span of time, and gathered into a sentence the moral history of the world. And we have great reason for believing that even unto Adam did this promise speak of good things to come, and that he was comforted, in his exile from Paradise, by the hope which it gave him of final deliverance. Compelled though he was to till an earth, on which rested the curse of its Créator, he may have known that there was blessing in store; and that, though he and his children must dig the ground in the sweat of their brow, there would fall on it a sweat, like great drops of blood, having virtue to remove the oppressive malediction. It must have been bitter to him to hear of the thorn and the thistle; but he may have learnt how thorns would be woven into a crown, and placed round the forehead of one who should be the lost "tree of life" to a dying Creation. It was only to have been expected, when the fatal act had been committed, that there would have ascended from the earth one fearful cry, and that then an eternal silence would have covered the desecrated globe. But, in place of this—though the gathered night was not at once dispersed—there still went up the anthem of praise from lowing herds, and waving corn, and stately forests; and man, in his exile, had an evening, and a morning, hymn, which spake gratefully of the head of the serpent as bruised by the seed of the woman—and all because God had already discovered himself as our Maker "who giveth songs in the night."

Thus also it has been, and is, with individual cases. There may be many in this assembly, who have known what it is to be oppressed with apprehensions of God's wrath against sin. They have passed through that dreary season, when conscience, often successfully resisted, or drugged into slumber, mightily asserts its authority, arrays the transgressions of a life, and anticipates the penalties of an eternity. And we say of the man who is suffering from conviction of sin, that it is more truly night with him, the night of the soul, than with the most wretched of those on whom lie the burdens of temporal woe. And Natural Theology, as we have already stated, can offer no encouragement in this utter midnight. It may have done its part in producing the convictions, but, in so doing, must have exhausted its resources. All its efforts must have been directed to the furnishing demonstrations of the inflexible government of a God of justice and righteousness; and the more powerful these demonstrations, the more would they shut up the transgressor to the certainty of destruction. And nevertheless, after a time, you find the man, who had been brought into so awful a darkness, and for whose comfort there is nothing to be gained from Natural Theology, walking in gladness, with a lightened heart, and a buoyant spirit. What could not be found in the stores of Natural Theology, has been found in those of revealed-intelligence, that God can, at the same time, be just and a justifier, that sinners can be pardoned, and sins not go unpunished. Therefore is it that he who was in darkness, the darkness of the soul, is now

lifting up his head with joy, and exulting in hope. The Spirit of God, which produced the conviction, has taken of the things of Christ, and, shewing them to the soul, made them effectual to conversion. And we call upon you to compare the man in these two estates. With his consciousness of the evil of sin heightened, rather than diminished, you find him changed from the desponding into the triumphant, exhibiting, in the largest measure, the accomplishment of the words, that there shall be given "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." You can offer no account of this surprising transformation, whilst you search for its reasons in natural causes. But when you appeal to the workings of Omnipotence; when you tell us of a propitiation for sin; when you refer to a divine agent, whose special office it is, to bring men to put faith in a sacrifice which reconciled a guilty world to its Creator—then you leave no cause for surprize, that, from a soul, round which had gathered deep and stern shadows, there should be ascending the rich notes of praise, and the stirring strains of hope; but then you are only proving with what exquisite truth it may be said, that God our Maker "giveth songs in the night."

We might easily multiply our illustrations. We might follow the believer through all the stages of his progress from earth to Heaven; and wheresoever you could shew that it was night, there could we shew you that God "giveth songs." It is not that he giveth no songs in the day; for he is with his people, and he wakes their praises,

in all time of their wealth, as well as in all time of their tribulation. But it is our nature to rejoice when all within and without is undisturbed; the miracle is to "rejoice in tribulation;" and this miracle is continually wrought as the believer presses through the wilderness. The harp of the human spirit never yields such sweet music, as when its framework is most shattered, and its strings are most torn. Then it is, when the world pronounces the instrument useless, and man would put it away as incapable of melody, that the finger of God delights in touching it, and draws from it a fine swell of harmony. Come night, come calamity, come affliction. God still says to his people, as he said to the Jews, when expecting the irruption of the Assyrian, "ye shall have a song, as in the night."

Is it the loss of property with which believers are visited? Our Maker "giveth songs in the night," and the chorus is heard, we have in Heaven "a better, even an enduring substance." Is it the loss of friends? Our Maker, as we have shewn you, "giveth songs in the night;" they "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope;" and over the very grave is heard the fine confession, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Have they their seasons of spiritual depression, when they cannot realize their privileges, nor assure themselves of acceptance with God? Indeed this is hard to bear—perhaps the severest of the trials which they are called to endure. This was David's case, when he pathetically exclaimed, "Deep calleth unto deep, at the

noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Yet the Psalmist could go on, in the very next verse, to declare, "The Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me." And no believer holds fast his confidence, as David did, without proving, that, if God hide for a while the light of his countenance, it is in order to make it more valued; without finding cause to break into the song, "it is good for me that I was afflicted." Let the thickest night gather; let death be at hand; and shall it be said that our text fails of accomplishment? On the contrary, it is here emphatically true that our Maker "giveth songs in the night." The believer in Christ knows and feels that his Redeemer "hath abolished death." He is not insensible to the terrors of death; for he regards the separation of soul and body as a direct consequence of the original curse, and therefore awful and disastrous. But then he is so assured of Immortality and a Resurrection, that he can approach the grave with confidence, and even exult that his departure is at hand. What upholds the dying man? What throws over his wasted countenance that air of serenity? What prompts those expressions of peace, those breathings of hope, which seem so little in accordance with his circumstances of trouble and decay? It is that God is whispering to his soul such words as these, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee." It is that his Maker is reminding him of the pledge, that death shall

be swallowed up in victory; that he is already causing the minstrelsy of the eternal city to come stealing on his ear—and is not all this the most convincing and touching evidence, that God our Maker “giveth songs in the night?”

Who would not be a believer in Christ, who would not be at peace with God? When such are the privileges of righteousness, the privileges through life, the privileges in death, the wonder is, that all are not eager to close with the offers of the Gospel, and make those privileges their own. Yet, alas, the Ministers of Christ have to exclaim, with the Prophet, “who hath believed our report?” and, with Elihu, “none saith, where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?” There may yet be moral insensibility in numbers who hear me. What shall we say to them? They may have youth on their side, and health, and plenty. The sky may be clear, and the voice of joy may be heard in their dwelling. But there must come a night, a dreary and oppressive night; for youth must depart, and strength be enfeebled, and sorrow encountered, and the shadows of evening fall upon the path. And what will they do then, if now, as God complains by his Prophet, “the harp and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts, but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands?” They may have their song now; but then we shall have only the bitter exclamation, “The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” We warn you in time. Though the firmament be

bright, we shew you the cloud, small as a man's hand, already rising from the sea; and we urge you to the breaking loose from habits of sin, and fleeing straightway to the Mediator Christ. It is for baubles which they despise when acquired, wealth which they count nothing when gained, gratifications which they loathe so soon as passed, that men sell their souls. And all that we now entreat of the young, is, that they will not, in the spring-time of life, strike this foul bargain. In the name of Him who made you, we beseech you to separate yourselves at once from evil practices, and evil associates; lest, in that darkest of all darkness, when the sun is to be "black as sackcloth of hair," and the moon as blood, and the stars are to fall, you may utter nothing but the passionate cry of despair; whilst the righteous are lifting up their heads with joy, and proving that they have trusted in a God "who giveth songs in the night."

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## SERMON III.

TESTIMONY CONFIRMED BY EXPERIENCE.

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### PSALM XLVIII. 8.

*As we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God; God will establish it for ever.*

THERE is a very striking part in the Litany of our Church, when, between two earnest supplications for deliverance, God is reminded of the great things which he had wrought in former times. The supplications to which we refer are put into the mouths of the people. "O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for thy name's sake." "O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for thine honour." Between these the Minister is directed to exclaim, "O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them." We are always much struck with this exclamation, and with the consequent alteration in the plea with which the people urge their suit for deliverance. In the first petition it is, "deliver us for thy name's sake;" in the second, "deliver us for thine honour."

The Minister has heard the congregation invoking God to come forth to their succour, and humbly reminding him how consistent it would be with all the attributes of his nature—for these are included in his name—to comply with their earnest supplication. And then the Minister, as though he knew that there was yet higher ground which the people might take, commemorates the marvellous interpositions of which olden times had sent down the records, reminding the congregation, by making confession to God, of deliverances wrought on behalf of their fathers. The people are animated by the recollection. They feel that God has pledged himself, by former answers to prayer, to arise, and shield those who cast themselves on his help. His own glory has become concerned in the not leaving such to perish; and shall they not then, with fresh confidence, re-iterate their petition? No sooner therefore has the Minister commemorated God's mercies, than the people, as though they had a new source of hope, press their suit with yet greater earnestness; and their voices mingle in the cry, "O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for thine honour." Is not this portion of our Litany constructed on the principle, that, what we have heard of God's doings in other times, we may expect to see or experience in our own, provided only there be similarity of circumstance? are not, in short, the exclamation of the Minister, and the consequent petition of the people, the expressions of a hope, or rather a belief, that the words of our text shall again be appropriate, "as we have heard,

so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts?"

It must have been to some special instance in which God had wrought a deliverance, parallel to one celebrated in Jewish annals, that reference is made in our text. The statement is exactly what would be uttered, if the parties, who have joined in the quoted sentences of our Litany, were to become the subjects of a divine interposition, similar to those which the Minister commemorated. But it is observed by Bishop Horsley, that there is no recorded interference of God on behalf of Jerusalem, which answers to the language employed in this Psalm. And it is therefore probable that a prophetic, or, at least, a spiritual interpretation must be given to the hymn. Indeed there are expressions which will not admit of being applied to the literal Jerusalem. Thus, in our text, it is said of the city of our God, "God will establish it for ever"—a prediction which cannot belong to the metropolis of Judea, which was often given up to the spoiler, but which holds good of that spiritual city, the Church of God, against which Christ declared that "the gates of Hell shall never prevail." And when, towards the conclusion of the Psalm, the succoured people are bidden to march, in joyful procession, round their beautiful city, that they might see how unscathed were its walls, how glorious its structures—"walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following"—you can scarcely

fail to feel, that the thing enjoined is the considering and admiring the privileges and securities of the Church, in order that we may both prize them ourselves, and be incited to the preserving them for our children.

We may therefore regard our text as uttered by members of the Church of Christ, that city of God which is made glad by the streams of the river of life. It is an assertion, made by those who had fled to the Church for safety, expecting deliverance within its walls, that their own experience bore out to the letter what had been reported by the believers of other days. The difference between hearing and seeing, of which they make mention, is the difference between receiving truth on the testimony of others, and the being ourselves its witnesses—a distinction such as that which the Patriarch Job drew, when humbled through a personal acquaintance with the dealings of God, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” And the great principle, or fact, which it will become us to endeavour to establish and illustrate, in discoursing on our text, is, that, before there is any personal experience in matters of religion, there may be an acting on the experience of others, and that, wheresoever this is faithfully done, the personal experience will be the probable result. We proceed at once to the exhibiting this principle or fact; designing to adduce, if possible, the most practical, as well as the most apposite instances, in which men may

say, "as we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts."

Now we shall begin with an application of the principle involved in our text, which has been made at great length by modern writers\*, and whose importance seems to claim for it the closest attention. We refer to the way in which men reach their persuasion that the Bible is God's word; for they evidently, for the most part, receive the Bible as inspired, long before they can prove any thing in regard of its Inspiration. We put the Bible into the hands of our children, as the word of the living God, and therefore demanding a reverence which can be claimed by no other volume in the whole circle of authorship. And our children grow up with what might almost be called an innate persuasion of the Inspiration of Scripture; they are all but born with the belief; and they carry it with them to riper years, rather as a received axiom, than as a demonstrated verity. It is almost exclusively on hearsay, if we may use the word, that the Bible is taken as divine, and the Apocrypha passed by as human; so that numbers, who are perhaps strenuous for the right of private judgment, do virtually, in the most important matter, receive and reject on the sole authority of the Church.

And it is well that it is so. If there were nothing of this taking upon trust; if every man, in place of having to set himself to the perusal of a volume which he regards as divine, must

\* Particularly Dr Chalmers, in the fourth volume of his works.

first pick out, by laborious study, from all the authorship of antiquity, the few pages which really bear the signature of Heaven, there would be an arrest on the progress of Christianity; for the life of each would be exhausted, ere he had constructed the book by which he must be guided. And yet it cannot be taken as a very satisfactory account of human belief, that it thus follows upon human bidding. But it is here, as we believe, that the principle of our text comes beautifully into operation. The Church, like the parent of a family, gives a volume into the hands of those who join her communion, bidding them receive it as divine, and study it as the word which can alone guide them to glory. And her members, like the children of the household, have no better reason, at first, for receiving the Bible as inspired, than because they have heard so in the city of the Lord. They yield so much of respect to the directions of their authorized teachers, or to the impressions which have been graven on them from infancy, as to give their homage to a volume which is presumed to bear so lofty a character. But then, though it may thus be on hearsay that they first receive the Bible as inspired, it is not on hearsay that they continue to receive it. We speak now of those who have searched the Scriptures for everlasting life, and who feel that they have found therein a Revelation of the alone mode of forgiveness. We speak of those in whom the word has "wrought effectually;" and we confidently affirm of them, that, though at one time they believed

in the Inspiration of the Canonical Scriptures, because their parents taught it, or their Ministers maintained it, yet now are they in possession of a personal, experimental, evidence, which is thoroughly conclusive on this fundamental point. It is not that they have gone through the laborious demonstrations, by which the learned have sustained the claims of the Old and New Testaments. It is comparatively a very small fraction of a community, who can examine the grounds on which the Church rests her judgment; and it is with the case of the great mass that we now wish to deal.

But we will give you what we reckon the history of the uneducated believer, so far as his acquaintance with Revelation is concerned. He may perhaps have been neglected in boyhood, so that he has grown up in ignorance; but he is visited by the Minister of his Parish, in some season of affliction, when the ruggedness of his nature is somewhat worn down by sorrow. The Minister presses upon him the study of the Bible, as of the word of his Creator, assuring him that he will therein find God's will as revealed by his Spirit. The cottager has undoubtedly heard of the Bible before; and it is no news to him, that it passes as a more than human book. But he has never yet given heed to what he heard; the book has been unopened, notwithstanding the high claims which it was known to advance. But now, softened by the Minister's kindness, and moved by his statements, he sets himself diligently to the perusal of Scripture, and steadily attends its sab-

bath expositions. And thus, though he is acting only on what he has heard, he brings himself under the self-evidencing power of Scripture, that power by which the contents of the Bible serve as its credentials. And this self-evidencing power is wonderfully great. The more than human knowledge which Scripture displays in regard of the most secret workings of the heart; the marvellous and unerring precision with which the provisions of the Gospel adapt themselves to the known wants and disabilities of our nature; the constancy with which the promises and directions of Holy writ, if put to the proof, are made good in one's own case—these and the like evidences of the divine origin of the Bible, press themselves quickly on the most illiterate student, when he searches it in humility, hoping to find, as he has been told that he shall, a message from God which will guide him towards Heaven. He began on the testimony of another; but, after a while, he goes forward on his own testimony. And though he has not been sitting in judgment on the credentials of Christianity, yet has he possessed himself of its contents; and on these he has found so much of the impress, and from them there has issued so much of the voice of Deity, that he is as certified in his own mind, and on grounds as satisfactory, of the Inspiration of Scripture, as any laborious and scientific enquirer, who has rifled the riches of Centuries, and brought them all to do homage before our holy religion. God has no more given to the learned the monopoly of evidence, than to the wealthy the monopoly of benevolence. The



poor man can exercise benevolence, for the widow's two mites may outweigh the noble's coffers: and the poor man may have an evidence that God is in the Bible, for it may speak to his heart as no human book can.

And if you contrast the man, when the Minister of Christ first entered his cottage, with what he is after patient obedience to the injunctions of the Church—in the one case, the mere giver of assent to a fellowman's testimony, in the other, the delighted possessor of a "witness in himself;" in the first instance, a believer not so much in the Inspiration of Scripture, as in the veracity of the individual who announces it, but, in the second, a believer in that Inspiration, because conscience and understanding and heart have all felt and confessed the superhuman authorship—Oh, as, by thus contrasting and comparing, you determine, that, through simply acting on what was told him, the man has been carried forward to a personal, experimental, demonstration of its truth, you must admit that he may class himself with those who can say, "as we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts."

But the principle has been carried yet further than this, and, we think, with great justice. It must be believed of the large mass of Protestants, that they have never even read the Apocryphal books, much less searched into the reasons on which those books are pronounced not inspired. Here therefore it cannot be said, that what has been heard is also seen in the city of our God. We can prove this in regard of the Canonical Scrip-

tures, because we can prove, that, when perused in obedience to what is heard, they quickly evidence their origin. But we seem unable to prove this in regard of the Apocryphal Scriptures; for they are not used to be subjected to any such test.

But suppose they were subjected to the like test, and why might we not expect the like result? There is to our mind something inexpressibly grand and beautiful in the thought, that God dwells, as it were, in the syllables which he has indited for the instruction of humankind, so that he may be found there when diligently sought, though he do not thus inhabit any other writing. He breathed himself into the compositions of Prophets and Apostles and Evangelists; and there, as in the mystic recesses of an everlasting Sanctuary, he still resides, ready to disclose himself to the humble, and to be evoked by the prayerful. But in regard of every other book, however fraught it may be with the maxims of piety, however pregnant with momentous truths, there is nothing of this shrining himself of Deity in the depths of its meaning. Men may be instructed by its pages, and draw from them hope and consolation. But never will they find there the burning Shekinah, which proclaims the actual presence of God; never hear a voice, as from the solitudes of an oracle, pronouncing the words of Immortality.

And we should never fear the bringing any Canonical book, or any Apocryphal, to the test thus supposed. Let a man take a Canonical book,

and let him take an Apocryphal; and let him determine to study both on the supposition that both are divine, because doubtful whether the Church be right in her decision, or desirous to gain evidence for himself. And if he be a sincere enquirer after truth, one really anxious to ascertain, in order that he may perform, the whole will of God, we know not why he should not experience the accomplishment of Christ's words, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God," and thus reach a sound decision as to which book is inspired, and which not. As he studies the inspired book, with humility and prayer, he will find its statements brought home to his conscience and heart, with that extraordinary force which is never attached to a human composition. He may not be able to construct a clear argument for the divine origin of the book; yet will the correspondence between what the book states, and what he experiences, and the constancy with which the fulfilment of its promises follows on submission to its precepts, combine into an evidence, thoroughly satisfactory to himself, that the pages which he reads had God for their author. But as he studies the non-inspired book, he will necessarily miss these tokens and impresses of Deity. There will be none of those mysterious soundings of the voice of the everliving God, which he has learnt to expect, and which he has always heard, wheresoever the writers have indeed been inspired. His own diligence may be the same, his faith, his prayerfulness. But it is impossible there should be those manifestations of

superhuman wisdom, those invariable sequences of fulfilled promises on obeyed precepts, which, in the other case, attested, at each step of his progress, that the document in his hands was a Revelation from above.

It may be said that all the argument, which he can thus obtain, must be vague and inconclusive, a thing of imagination rather than of reason, and therefore, in the largest sense, liable to error. But we rejoice, on the contrary, in believing in the thorough sufficiency of the poor man's argument for the Inspiration of Scripture. It is an argument to his own conscience, an argument to his own heart. It is the argument drawn from the experienced fact, that the Bible and the soul, with her multiplied feelings and powers, fit into each other, like two parts of a complicated machine, proving, in their combination, that each was separately the work of the same divine artist. And you may think that the poor man may be mistaken; but he feels that he cannot be mistaken. The testimony is like a testimony to his senses; if he cannot transfer it to another, it is incontestible to himself, and therefore gives as much fixedness to the Theology of the cottage as ever belonged to the Theology of the Academy.

And if he can thus prove, from his own experience, the divine origin of the inspired book, he may of course equally prove, from his own experience, the human origin of the non-inspired. The absence of certain tokens in the one case, will be as conclusive to him as their presence in the other. So that, we may affirm of all classes

of Christians, provided only they be sincere and prayerful in their enquiry after truth, that, if not content with the decision of the Church, they may put to the proof what they have heard in the city of our God. Let them take the Apocrypha, and let them study it on the supposition that its books are equally inspired with those to which their Church assigns so lofty a character. And their spirits may be stirred within them, as they read of the chivalrous deeds of the Macbean Princes, and even their tears may be drawn forth, as the Book of Wisdom pours its elegiac poetry over those who die young. But they will not find that moral probing, that dissection of the heart, that profundity of meaning which makes a single text like a mine from which new treasures may continually be dug, those flashes of truth which suddenly issue from what had long seemed dark sayings. These and the like evidences that the living God is in the book will be wanting, however its pages may be printed with heroic story, or glowing with poetic fire. Even though the style and sentiment may be similar to those to which they have been used in Holy writ, they will not experience the same elevation of soul as when they trust themselves to the soarings of Isaiah, the same sweepings of the chords of the heart as when they join in the hymns of David, nor the same echo of the conscience as when they listen to the remonstrances of St Peter or St Paul. And what then is to prevent their being their own witnesses to the non-inspiration of the Apocryphal, as well as to

the inspiration of the Canonical Scriptures? What is to prevent their bringing their own experience in confirmation of what had originally been told them by the Church, and thus joining themselves to those who can say, "as we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts?"

Now the points, on which we have thus touched, have been handled at great length, and with consummate ability, by modern writers. And we have dwelt on them, not with any idea of adding to the strength with which they have been asserted, or the clearness with which they have been illustrated; but simply in the hope of fixing the attention of the younger part of this audience on what is called the self-evidencing power of Scripture. With all our desire that they should be thoroughly masters of the external evidences of Christianity, we are unspeakably more anxious that they should labour to possess themselves of the internal; for, in searching after these, they must necessarily study the Bible itself. If they will learn to view the contents of Scripture as themselves its credentials, we shall engage them in the most hopeful of all studies, the study of God's word as addressing itself to the heart, and not merely to the head. For there may be an intellectual Theology; religion may be reduced into a science; and the writers on the evidences, and the Commentators on the text of the Bible, may just do for Christianity what the laborious and the learned have done for the various branches of Natural Philosophy, make truths bright rather than sharp, clear to the understanding, but without

hold on the affections. And this is not the Christianity which we wish to find amongst you, the Christianity of the man who can defeat a sceptic, and then lose his soul. We would have you well-read—too well-read you cannot be—in what has been written in defence of the faith; but, above all, we would fasten you to the prayerful study of the sacred volume itself; this will lead you to the hearing God's voice in the Bible, and, until that is heard, the best champion of truth may be far from the Kingdom of Heaven.

But there is yet a more obvious application of the words of our text, one which, though it may have suggested itself to your minds, is of too practical a kind to be omitted by the preacher. There is a reference in the passage to the unchangeableness of God, to the similarity of his dealings with men, when there is similarity of circumstance. It is said of God by Solomon, that He "requireth that which is past." He seeks again that which is past, recalling, as it were, the proceedings, whether in judgment or mercy, of departed ages, and repeating them to the present generation. And it is on this account that there is such value in the registered experience of the believers of other days, so that the biography of the righteous is among the best treasures possessed by a Church. It is, in one sense at least, a vast advantage to us that we live late in the world. We have all the benefit of the spiritual experience of many centuries, which has been bequeathed to us as a legacy of more worth than large wealth, or far-spreading Empire. We have not, therefore, to

tread a path in which we have had but few precursors. Far as the eye can reach, the road we have to traverse is crowded with beckoning forms, as though the sepulchres gave up their host of worthies, that we might be animated by the view of the victorious throng. And this is an advantage which it is hardly possible to overrate. You have only to add to this an acquaintance with the unchangeableness of God, and there seems all that can be needed to the encouragement and confidence of the righteous. The unchangeableness of God assures us that he will do in our own days, as he has done in earlier: the registered experience of former times instructs us as to the accuracy with which he has made good the declarations of Scripture: and by combining these two, the assurance and the instruction, we gain a witness, which nothing should shake, that, with the Bible for our guide, we shall have peace for our present portion, unbounded glory for our future.

There is here a new witness for the Bible, a witness accessible to the meanest, the witness of happy lives and triumphant deaths. The very peasant masters and rejoices in this evidence. The histories of good men find their way into his hamlet; and even in the village Church yard sleep some whose righteousness will be long had in remembrance. And knowing, as he does, that those, whose bright names thus hallow the annals whether of his country or his valley, were "acceptable to God, and approved of men," through simply submitting themselves to the guidance of Scripture; that they were Bible precepts which



made them the example and blessing of their fellows, and Bible promises which nerved them for victory over sorrow and death—has he not a noble evidence on the side of Scripture, an evidence against which the taunts of scepticism are directed without effect, an evidence which augments with every piece of Christian biography that comes into his possession, and with every instance of Christian consistency that comes under his observation?

And what he thus hears in the city of God acts, on every account, as a stimulus to his own faith and steadfastness. The registered experience of those who have gone before, encourages him to expect the same mercies from, the same God. He kindles as he reads their story. Their memory rouses him. He asks the mantle of the ascending Prophet, that he may divide with it the waters which had before owned its power. Thus what he has heard in the city of his God confirms his diligence, and animates his hope. He takes the experience of others, and proceeds upon the supposition that it may be made his own. And it is made his own. Through faith the same wonders are wrought. Through prayer the same mercies are obtained. The same promises are accomplished, the same assistances communicated, the same victories achieved. And as the man remembers how his spirit glowed at the mention of noble things done on behalf of the righteous; how the records of good men's lives soothed him, and cheered him, and excited him; how their prayers taught him to be a suppliant, and their

praises moved him to be hopeful; how they seemed to have lived for his instruction, and died for his comfort—and then as he feels, how, through treading the same path, and trusting in the same Mediator, he has already obtained a measure, and may expect a yet larger, of the blessings wherewith they were blessed of their God—oh, his language will be that of our text; and he will join, heart and soul, with those who are confessing, “as we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of our God.”

There will be a yet finer use of these words: they shall be woven into a nobler than the noblest earthly chaunt. Are we deceiving men, are we merely sketching ideal pictures, to whose beauty and brilliancy there is nothing correspondent in future realities, when we expatiate on the glories of Heaven, and task imagination to build its palaces, and pourtray its inhabitants? Yes, in one sense we deceive them: they are but ideal pictures which we draw. What human pencil can delineate scenes in which God manifests his presence? What human colouring emulate the effulgence which issues from his throne? But we deceive them only through inability to rise sufficiently high; we exhaust imagination, but not the thousandth part is told. They are deceived, only if they think we tell them all, if they take the pictures which we draw as perfect representations of the majesty of the future.

When we speak to them of the deep and permanent repose of Heaven; when we enlarge on the manifestations of Deity; when we declare

that Christ, as "the Minister of the Sanctuary," will unfold to his Church the mysteries which have perplexed them; when we gather together what is gorgeous, and precious, and beautiful, in the visible Creation, and crowd it into the imagery wherewith we delineate the final home of the saints; when we take the sun from the firmament, that the Lord God may shine there, and remove all Temples from the city, that the Almighty may be its Sanctuary, and hush all human minstrelsy, that the immense tide of song may roll from thousand times ten thousand voices—we speak only the words of truth and soberness, though we have not compassed the greatness, nor depicted the loveliness, of the portion which awaits the disciples of Christ. If there be one passage of Scripture which we may venture to put into the lips of redeemed men in glory, it is our text; in this instance, we may be confident that the change from earth to Heaven will not have made the language of the one unsuited to the other. Oh, as the shining company take the circuit of the celestial city; as they "walk about Zion, and go round about her," telling the towers thereof, marking well her bulwarks, and considering her palaces; who can doubt that they say one to another, "as we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of our God?" We heard that here "the wicked cease from troubling," and now we behold the deep rich calm. We heard that here we should be with the Lord, and now we see him face to face. We heard that here we should know even as we are known, and

now the ample page of universal truth is open to our inspection. We heard that here, with the crown on the head, and the harp in the hand, we should execute the will, and hymn the praises, of our God, and now we wear the diadem, and wake the melody. They can take to themselves the words which the dying leader Joshua used of the Israelites, "not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord our God spake concerning us; all are come to pass, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

Shall it be said of any amongst ourselves, that they heard of Heaven, but made no effort to behold it? Is there one who can be indifferent to the announcement of its glories, one who can feel utterly careless whether he ever prove for himself, that there has been no deceit, no exaggeration, but that it is indeed a surpassingly fair land which is to be everlastingly the home of those who believe in the Redeemer? Everlastingly the home—for we must not overlook the concluding words of our text, "God will establish it for ever." The walls of that city shall never decay; the lustres of that city shall never grow dim; the melodies of that city shall never be hushed. And is it of a city such as this that any one of us can be indifferent whether or no he be finally an inhabitant? We will not believe it. The old and the young, the rich and the poor, all must be ready to bind themselves by a solemn vow, that they will "seek first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness." It is not the voice of a solitary and weak fellowman which now tells you

of Heaven. God is summoning you. Angels are summoning you. The myriads who have gone before are summoning you. We are surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses." The battlements of the sky seem thronged with those who have fought the good fight of faith. They bend down from their eminence, and bid us ascend, through the one Mediator, to the same lofty dwelling. They shall not call in vain. We know their voices, as they sweep by us solemnly and sweetly. And we think, and we trust, that there will not be one of you who will leave the Sanctuary, without some such reflection and prayer as this—I have heard of Heaven, I have been told of its splendours and of its happiness; grant, gracious and eternal Father, that I fail not at last to be associated with those who shall rejoicingly exclaim, "as we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts."

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## SERMON IV.

THE GENERAL RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT.

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ST JOHN, V. 28, 29.

*Marvel not at this ; for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth : they that have done good unto the Resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the Resurrection of damnation.*

You will at once perceive that these words of our Saviour are not to be understood without a reference to those by which they are preceded. They shew that surprize was both felt and expressed at something which he had just said ; for they are a direction to his audience not to marvel, or wonder, at what he had affirmed, seeing that he had to state what was yet more astonishing. If you examine the context of the passage, you will find that our Lord had been speaking of the effects which should follow upon belief of his word, and that he had used language in regard of those effects, which borrowed its imagery from death and a Resurrection. This surprized and displeased his hearers. They could not understand how the word of Christ could possess such a power as he had claimed ; and they

perhaps even doubted whether the new Creation of which he spake, the quickening of souls "dead in trespasses and sins," ever took place.

It was to meet these feelings, which he perceived stirring in their minds, that Christ proceeded to address them in the words of our text. "Marvel not at this." As though he had said, you are staggered at what I have declared, fancying it incredible, or, at least, far beyond my power. But I have a yet more wonderful thing of which to tell you, a thing that shall be done by myself, though requiring still greater might. You are amazed that I should speak of raising those who are morally dead; but "marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear my voice."

This appears to us the true account of our Lord's reasoning. The Resurrection of the body, the calling from the graves those who had long slumbered therein, is represented as a more wonderful thing than what had just excited the amazement of the Jews. And thus the passage sets, as we think, the Resurrection of the body under a most imposing point of view, making it the great prodigy in God's dealings with our race. That there is nothing else to marvel at, in comparison of the Resurrection of the dead—this seems to us the assertion of Christ, and such assertion demands a most careful consideration. Of course, independently on this assertion, there is a great deal in the passage which affords material for profitable meditation, seeing that the whole business of the last Audit is summarily, but strikingly;

described. The remarkable feature, however, of the text is undoubtedly that of its making the Resurrection of the body the first of all marvels; and it is, therefore, to the illustration of this that we shall give our chief care, though not to the exclusion of the more general truths affirmed by our Lord.

Now we are accustomed to think, and, doubtless, with justice, that there is an affinity between God and our souls, but nothing of the kind between God and our bodies. We do not indeed presume to speak of the human soul, any more than of the human body, as having congeniality, or sameness of nature, with the great first cause, the self-existent Deity. But we may venture to declare that all the separation which there is between the soul and the body, is an advance towards the nature of God, so that the soul, inasmuch as it is spiritual, far more nearly resembles the divine being than the body, inasmuch as it is material.

And when we reach this conclusion, we are at a point from which to view with great amazement the Resurrection of the body. So long as a divine interference is limited to the soul, we may be said to be prepared, at least in a degree, for whatever can be told us of its greatness and disinterestedness. We attach a dignity to the soul, which, though it could not, after there had been sin, establish any claim to the succours of God, seems to make it, if not to be expected, yet not to be wondered at, that it was not abandoned to degradation and ruin. The soul is so much more nearly of the same nature with God than the body, that a spiritual Resurrection appears a thousand-



fold more likely than a corporeal. And you are to observe that there is nothing in the nature of the case, to make it clear to us, that, if the soul were redeemed, so also must be the body. The ordinary current of thought and feeling may almost be said to be against the Redemption of the body. The body is felt to be an incumbrance to the soul, hindering it in its noblest occupations, and contributing nothing to its most elevated pleasures. So far from the soul being incapable of happiness, if detached from the body, it is actually its union with the body, which, to all appearance, detains it from happiness; so that, in its finest and loftiest musings, its exclamation often is, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest." Even now the soul is often able to rise above the body, to detach itself, for a while, from matter, and to soar into regions which it feels to be more its home than this earth. And when compelled to return from so splendid an excursion, there is a sentiment of regret that it must still tabernacle in flesh; and it is conscious of longing for a day, when it may finally abandon its perishable dwelling.

Thus there is nothing of a felt necessity for the reunion of the soul to the body, to guide us in expecting the corporeal as well as the spiritual Resurrection. We might almost affirm that the feeling is all the other way. And though, through some fine workings of reason, or, through attention to lingering traces of Patriarchal religion, men, destitute of the light of Revelation, have reached a persuasion of the soul's Immortality,

never have they formed even a conjecture of the body's Resurrection. They have imaged to themselves the spirit, which they felt burning and beating within them, emancipated from thralldom, and admitted into a new and eternal estate. But they have consigned the body to the interminable dishonours of the grave; and never, in the boldest imaginings, whether of their philosophy, or their poetry, have they thrown life into the ashes of the sepulchre. It is almost the voice of nature, that the soul survives death: the soul gives its own testimony, and often so impressively, that a man could as easily doubt his present as his future existence. But there is no such voice put forth in regard of the body: no solemn and mysterious whisperings are heard from its resting-place, the echo of a truth which seems syllabled within us, that bone shall come again to bone, and sinews bind them, and skin cover them, and breath stir them.

And we may safely argue, that, if the Immortality of the soul be an article of Natural Theology, but the Resurrection of the body were never even thought of by the most profound of its disciples, there can be no feeling in man that the matter, as well as the spirit, of which he is composed, must reappear in another state of being, in order either to the possibility or the felicity of his existence. So that—for this is the point to which our remarks tend—we may declare of the Resurrection of the body, that it is altogether an unexpected fact, one which no exercise of reason could have led us to conjecture, and for which there

is not even that natural longing which might be interpreted into an argument of its probability. It is not then when God interposes on behalf of the soul, it is when he interposes on behalf of the body, that the great cause is given for amazement. A spark, one might almost call it, of himself, an emanation from his own Immortality, mighty in its powers, mysterious in its wanderings, sublime in its anticipations, we scarcely wonder that a spiritual thing, like the soul, should engage the carefulness of its Maker, and that, if it sully its brightness, and mar its strength, he should graciously provide for its final recovery. But the body—matter, which is man's link of association with the lowest of the brutes, and which Natural and Revealed Theology are alike earnest in removing to the farthest possible distance from the divine nature—the body, whose members are "the instruments of unrighteousness," whose wants make our feebleness, whose lusts are our tempters, whose infirmities our torment—that this ignoble and decaying thing should be cared for by God, who is ineffably more spiritual than spirit, so that he designs its reappearance in his own immediate presence, what is comparable in its wonderfulness to this? Prodigy of prodigies, that this corruptible should put on incorruption, this mortal Immortality. And scribes and Pharisees might have listened with amazement, and even with incredulity, as the Lord our Redeemer affirmed the effects which would be wrought on the soul through the doctrines and deeds of his mission. But he had stranger things to tell; for he had to speak

of the body, as well as of the soul, rising from its ruins, and gloriously reconstructed. Yes, observing how his hearers were surprized, because he had spoken of the spiritually dead as quickened by his word, he might well say unto them, "marvel not at this," and give as his reason, "for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear my voice."

Now, throughout this examination of the truth, that the Resurrection of the body furnishes, in an extraordinary degree, cause of wonder and surprize, we have made no reference to the display of divine power which this Resurrection must present. We have simply enlarged on what may be called the unexpectedness of the event, proving this unexpectedness from the inferiority of matter, its utter want of affinity to Deity, and the feelings of even man himself in regard to its detracting from his dignity and happiness.

But we do not know, that, in the whole range of things effected by God, there is ought so surprizing, regard being had only to the power displayed, as the Resurrection of the body. If you will ponder, for a few moments, the facts of a Resurrection, you will probably allow that the power, which must be exerted in order to the final reconstruction of every man's body, is more signal than that displayed in any spiritual renovation, or in any of those divine operations which we are able to trace in the visible Universe. You are just to think that this framework of flesh, in which my soul is now enclosed, will be reduced at death to the dust from which it was taken.

I cannot tell where or what will be my sepulchre—whether I shall sleep in one of the quiet Churchyards of my own land, or be exposed on some foreign shore, or fall a prey to the beasts of the desert, or seek a tomb in the depths of the unfathomable waters. But an irreversible sentence hath gone forth—"dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return"—and assuredly, ere many years, and perhaps even ere many days have elapsed, must my "earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved," rafter from rafter, beam from beam, and the particles, of which it has been curiously compounded, be separated from each other, and perhaps scattered to the four winds of Heaven. And who will pretend to trace the wanderings of these particles, into what other substances they may enter, of what other bodies they may form part, so as to appear and disappear many times in living shape, before the dawn of the great Easter of the Universe? There is manifestly the most thorough possibility, that the elements, of which my body is composed, may have belonged to the bone and flesh of successive generations; and that, when I shall have passed away and be forgotten, they will be again wrought into the structure of animated beings.

And when you think that my body, at the Resurrection, must have at least so much of its original matter, as shall be necessary for the preservation of identity, for the making me know and feel myself the very same being who sinned and suffered and was disciplined on earth, you must allow that nothing short of infinite know-

ledge and power, could prevail to the watching, and disentangling, and keeping duly separate, whatever is to be again builded into a habitation for my spirit, so that it may be brought together from the four ends of the earth, detached from other creatures, or extracted from other substances. This would be indeed a wonderful thing, if it were true of none but myself, if it were only in my solitary case that a certain portion of matter had thus to be watched, kept distinct though mingled, and appropriated to myself whilst belonging to others. But try to suppose the same holding good of every human being, of Adam, and each member of his countless posterity, and see whether the Resurrection will not utterly confound and overburden the mind. To every individual in the interminable throng shall his own body be given, a body so literally his own, that it shall be made up, to at least a certain extent, of the matter which composed it whilst he dwelt on this earth. And yet this matter may have passed through innumerable changes. It may have circulated through the living tribes of many generations; or it may have been waving in the trees of the forest; or it may have floated on the wide waters of the deep. But there has been an eye upon it in all its appropriations, and in all its transformations; so that, just as though it had been indelibly stamped, from the first, with the name of the human being to whom it should finally belong, it has been unerringly reserved for the great day of Resurrection. Thus myriads upon myriads of atoms—for you may count up till imagination is wearied, and reckon

that you have but one unit of the still inapproachable sum—myriads upon myriads of atoms, the dust of Kingdoms, the ashes of all that have lived, are perpetually jostled, and mingled, and separated, and animated, and swept away, and reproduced, and, nevertheless, not a solitary particle but holds itself ready, at the sound of the last trump, to combine itself with a multitude of others, in a human body in which they once met perhaps a thousand years before.

We frankly own that this appears to us among the most inscrutable of wonders. That God should have produced countless worlds, and that he should marshall all their motions, as they walk the immensity of his Empire—it is an amazing contemplation; and the mind cannot compass the greatness of a power which had only to speak and it was done, and which hath ever since upheld its own magnificent Creation, in all the grandeur of its structures, and in all the harmony of its relations. But, with all its majesty, there is a simplicity in the mechanism of systems and constellations; every star has its place and its orbit; and we see no traces of a complication, or confusion, which might render necessary unwearied and infinite watchfulness, in order to the preventing universal disorder. And it is again a surprising truth, that the Spirit of God should act on the human soul, that, secretly and silently, it should renovate its decayed powers, refine its affections, and awaken the dormant Immortality. Yet even here we may speak of simplicity—each soul, like each star, has its own sphere of motion; each is distinct from each; and none

has ever to be dissolved, and mingled, like the body, with the elements of a million others.

It still then remains a kind of marvel amongst marvels, that there hath not died the man who shall not live again, live again in that identical body which his spirit abandoned, when summoned back to God. And upon this account, upon account of the apparently vaster power displayed in a Resurrection, may we suppose that Christ bade his hearers withhold their amazement at what he had advanced. Yes, and we feel that he might have spoken of every other portion of God's dealings with our race, and, without depreciating the wonderfulness of other things, have declared, at each step, that he had stranger truths in store. He might have spoken of Creation; and, whilst an audience were confounded at the story of animate and inanimate things starting suddenly into being, he might have added, "marvel not at this." He might have spoken, as he did speak, of a spiritual regeneration pervading large masses of the family of man; and, whilst those who heard him were looking surprized and incredulous, he might have added, as he did add, "marvel not at this." For he had to speak of a rifling of the sepulchres, of the reanimating the dust of buried generations. And this was to speak of earth, and sea, and air, resolving themselves suddenly into the flesh and sinew of humankind. This was to speak of countless particles, some from the east and others from the west, these from the north and those from the south, moved by mysterious impulse, and combining into the limbs of Patriarchs, and Prophets,



and Priests, and Kings, and people. This was to speak of the re-appearance of every human being that ever moved on the face of the earth—the old man who sunk beneath the burden of years, and the young man who perished in his prime, and the infant who just opened his eyes on a sinful and sad world, and then closed them as though terrified—all reproduced, though all had been dispersed like chaff before the hurricane, all receiving their original elements, though those elements had been the play-things of the winds, and the fuel for the flames, and the foam upon the waters. And if this were indeed the speaking of a general Resurrection, oh, then our Lord might have already been affirming what was wonderful; but, whatsoever that had been, he might have gone on to repress the astonishment of his hearers, saying unto them, “marvel not at this,” and giving as his reason, “for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear my voice.”

Now we have probably advanced enough in explanation of what perhaps at first seems hardly to have been expected, namely, that our Lord should represent other wonders, even that of the spiritually passing from death unto life, as not to be wondered at, in comparison with the Resurrection of the body. We proceed, therefore, to the examining what Christ asserts in regard of those sublime transactions which will be associated with this surpassingly strange event.

“The hour is coming.” More than eighteen hundred years have elapsed, since he who spake as “never man spake,” and who could utter nothing

but truth, made this assertion, an assertion which implied that the hour was at hand. But the dead are yet in their graves; no vivifying voice has been heard in the sepulchres. We know however that "a thousand years are with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years." We count it not therefore strange that the predicted hour, the hour so full of mystery and might, has not yet arrived. But it must come; it may not perhaps be distant; and there may be some of us, for ought we can tell, who shall be alive on the earth when the voice issues forth, the voice which shall be echoed from the sea and the city and the mountain and the desert, all Creation hearkening, and all that hath ever lived simultaneously responding. But whether we be of the quick or of the dead, on the morning of the Resurrection, we must hear the voice, and join ourselves to the swarming throng which presses forward to Judgment. And whose is the voice that is thus irresistible, which is heard even in the graves of the earth, and in the caverns of the deep, and which is heard only to be obeyed? Know ye not that voice? Ye have heard it before. It is the voice which said, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is the voice which prayed on behalf of murderers, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." It is the voice which said, "It is finished," pronouncing the completion of the work of human Redemption. Yes, ye have heard that voice before. Ye have heard it in the ministrations of the Gospel. It hath

called to you, it hath pleaded with you. And those who have listened to it in life, and who have obeyed it when it summoned them to take up the cross, to them it will be a mighty comfort, that, in the voice which is shaking the Universe, and wakening the dead, they recognize the tones of Him who could be "touched with a feeling of their infirmities."

For it is, we think, one of the most beautiful of the arrangements which characterize the Gospel, that the offices of Redeemer and Judge meet in the same person, and that person divine. We call it a beautiful arrangement, because securing for us tenderness as well as equity, the sympathies of a friend, as well as the disinterestedness of a most righteous arbiter. Had the Judge been only man, the imperfection of his nature would have made us expect much of error in his verdicts. Had he been only God, the distance between Him and us would have made us fear it impossible, that, in determining our lot, he would take into account our feebleness and trials. But in the person of Christ there is that marvellous combination which we seek in the Judge of the whole human race. He is God, and, therefore, must he know every particular of character. But he is also man, and, therefore, can he put himself into the position of those who are brought to his bar. And because the Judge is thus the Mediator, the Judgment seat can be approached with confidence and gladness. The believer in Christ, who, hearkened to the suggestions of God's Spirit, and brake away from the trammels of sin, shall know.

the Son of man, as he comes down in the magnificent sternness of celestial authority. And we say not that it shall be altogether without dread, or apprehension, that the righteous, starting from the sleep of death, shall hear the deepening roll of the archangel's summons, and behold the terrific pomp of heavenly judicature. But we are certain that they will be assured and comforted, as they gaze upon their Judge, and recognize their surety. Words such as these will occur to them, "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." "By that man." The man who "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." The man who uttered the pathetic words, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together." The man who was "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." The man who sat in weariness by the well of Samaria; the man who wept in anguish at the grave of Lazarus; the man who compassionated the weakness of his slumbering disciples; the man whose "sweat was as it were great drops of blood," and who submitted to be scourged and buffeted and crucified "for us men, and for our Salvation." Yes, this is the very being who is to gather the nations before him, and determine the everlasting condition of each individual. And though we dare not attempt to define the emotions of those most assured of deliverance, when standing, in their Resurrection bodies, on the earth, as it heaves with strange convulsions, and looking on a firmament lined

with ten thousand times ten thousand angels, and beholding a throne of fire and cloud, such as was never piled for mortal Sovereignty, and hearing sounds of which even imagination cannot catch the echo—yet is it enough to assure us that they will be full of hope and of gladness, to tell us that he who will speak to them is he who once died for them—Oh, there will be peace to the righteous, when “the Heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll,” if it be Christ who saith, “the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear my voice.”

But with what feelings will those hear the voice, of whom the Saviour may affirm, “I have called, and ye refused; ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof?” They too shall know the voice; and it shall be to them as the voice of despised mercy, the voice of slighted love. They shall be more startled, and more pierced, and more lacerated, by that voice, than if it had never before been heard, or if its tones were not remembered. The sound of that voice will at once waken the memory of warnings that have been neglected, invitations refused, privileges unimproved. It will be painfully eloquent of all that was vainly done to win them to repentance, and therefore terribly reproachful, ominous of a doom which it is now too late to avert. They would have more hope, they would be less beaten down by a consciousness that they were about to enter on everlasting misery, if a strange voice had summoned them from the tomb, a voice as of many thunderings,

a voice that had never spoken tenderly and plaintively, never uttered the earnest beseechings, the touching entreaties, of a friend, a brother, a Redeemer. Any voice rather than this voice. None could be so dirge-like, so full of condemnation, so burdened with malediction, as that which had often said, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?"

But this is the voice; and when this voice is heard, "all that are in the graves shall come forth." And under how many divisions shall the swarming myriads be arranged? They have had very different opportunities and means, and you might have expected them to be separated into great variety of classes. But we read of only one division, of only two classes. "They that have done good unto the Resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the Resurrection of damnation." There is not, you observe, any thing intermediate. All rise, so that there is no annihilation; all rise, either to be unspeakably happy, or unspeakably miserable, for there are but two Resurrections. We may indeed be sure that both Heaven and Hell will present recompenses suited to all varieties of character, and that in the allotments of both there will be a graduated scale. But let it never, on this account, be supposed that there may be a happiness so imperfect, and a misery so inconsiderable, that there shall be but little final difference between some who are acquitted, and others who are condemned. "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed." The last admitted, and the first excluded, never

let us think that these two classes approach so nearly to equality, that it may be comparatively unimportant with which we are ranked. Heaven cannot dwindle away into Hell, and Hell cannot be softened away into Heaven. Happiness or misery—one or other of these must be the portion of every man; and whilst we freely confess that happiness and misery may admit of almost countless degrees, and that thus there may be room for vast variety of retributions, we contend that between the two there must be an untravelled separation: the happiness, or the misery, of one may be unspeakably less than that of another; but the least happy, and the least miserable, who shall tell us how much space there is between these for the agony and remorse of a storm-tossed spirit?

Observe then that it must be either of a “Resurrection of life,” or of a “Resurrection of damnation,” that each amongst us will be finally partaker. And it is to depend on our works, which of the two shall be our Resurrection. “They that have done good,” and “they that have done evil,” are our Lord’s descriptions of the respective classes. Works are given as the alone criterion by which we shall be judged. And this interferes not with the great doctrine of justification by faith, because good works spring from faith, and are both its fruit and its evidence; whilst, by making works the test, a ground is afforded for the judgment of those to whom Christ has not been preached, as well as of those who have been invited to the believing on his name. The whole

human family may be brought to the same bar, seeing that the only thing to be decided, is, whether they have done good, or whether they have done evil.

And what say you to all this? If we could escape the Judgment, or if we could bribe the Judge; if we had the bone of iron, and the sinew of brass, and the flesh of marble, so that we might defy the fire and the worm, why, then we might eat and drink, and amass gold, and gratify lust. But the Judgment is not to be escaped—the very dead are to hear the voice, and who then can hide himself? And the Judge is not to be bribed; it is the eternal God himself, whose are the worlds, and all which they contain. And we are sensitive beings, beings with vast capacities for wretchedness, presenting unnumbered inlets to a ministry of vengeance—shall we then, in spite of all this, persist in neglecting the great Salvation?

We address ourselves now especially to our younger brethren, desiring to conclude the discourses of the month with a word of exhortation to those on whom “the dew of their youth” is still freshly resting. We have set before you the Resurrection of life, and the Resurrection of damnation; and we now tell you that you have your fate in your own keeping, and that there is no election but his own through which any one of you can perish. We speak to you as free, accountable, beings, each of whom is so circumstanced and assisted that he may, if he will, gain Heaven through the merits of Christ. The ques-



tion therefore is, whether you will act as candidates for Eternity, or live as those who know nothing of the great end of their Creation. Born for Immortality, destined to equality with angels, and entreated to "work out your Salvation with fear and trembling," will ye degrade yourselves to the level of the brute, and lose those souls for which Christ died? It is a question which each must answer for himself. Each is free to obey, or flee, youthful lusts, to study, or neglect, God's word, to live without prayer, or to be earnest in supplication. There is no compulsion on any one of you to be vicious; and, be well assured, there will be no compulsion on any one of you to be virtuous. Passions may be strong; but not too strong to be resisted through that grace which is given to all who seek it, but forced upon none who despise it. Temptations may be powerful; they are never irresistible: he who struggles shall be made victorious; but God delivers none who are not striving to deliver themselves.

Be watchful therefore—watchful against sins of the flesh, watchful against sins of the mind. Against sins of the flesh—sensuality so debases and enervates, that the soul, as though sepulchred in the body, can do nothing towards vindicating her origin. "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Against sins of the mind—take heed that ye do not so admire and extol reason, as to think lightly of Revelation. Ye live in days when mind is on the stretch, and in

scenes where there is every thing to call it out. And we do not wish to make you less acute, less enquiring, less intelligent, than the warmest admirers of reason can desire you to become. We only wish you to remember that arrogance is not greatness, and that conceit is the index, not of strength, but of weakness. To exalt reason beyond its due place is to debase it; to set the human in rivalry with the divine is to make it contemptible. Let reason count the stars, weigh the mountains, fathom the depths—the employment becomes her, and the success is glorious. But when the question is, “how shall a man be just with God,” reason must be silent, Revelation must speak; and he who will not hear it assimilates himself to the first Deist, Cain; he may not kill a brother, he certainly destroys himself.

And that you may be aided in overcoming sin, let your thoughts dwell often on that “strict and solemn account which you must one day give at the Judgment seat of Christ.” I have endeavoured to speak to you of the general Resurrection, and the last great Assize. To the large mass of you it is not probable that I shall ever speak again. But we shall meet, when the sheeted dead are stirring, and the elements are dissolving. And “knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” Would that we could persuade you. Is there no voice from the “great white throne;” nothing startling in the opened books; no eloquence in the trumpet of the archangel; nothing terrible in the doom, “depart ye cursed,” nothing beautiful in the words, “come ye blessed?” I

cannot plead with you, if insensible to the sublime and thrilling oratory of the Judgment scene. If you can go away, and be as dissipated as ever, and as indifferent as ever, now that ye have beheld the Son of man coming in the clouds, and heard, as it were, your own names in the shrill summons to his bar—what can I say to you? Indeed I feel that there are no more formidable weapons in the moral armoury; and I can but pray—for there is yet room for prayer—that God would put sensibility into the stone, and give you feeling enough to feel for yourselves.

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## SERMON V.

### THE TWO SONS.

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ST MATTHEW XXI. 28, 29, 30.

*But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, Sir, and went not.*

OUR Saviour had such knowledge of the human heart, and such power of expressing that knowledge, that he frequently gives us, in one or two bold outlines, descriptions of great classes into which the world, or the Church, may be divided. There is no more remarkable instance of this than the parable of the sower, with which we may suppose you all well acquainted. In that parable Christ furnishes descriptions of four classes of the hearers of the Gospel, each description being brief, and fetched from the character of the soil on which the sower cast his seed. But the singularity is, that these four classes include the whole mass of hearers, so that, when combined, they make up either the world or the Church. You cannot imagine any fifth class. For in every man

who is brought within sound of the Gospel, the seed must be as that by the way-side which is quickly carried away, or as that on shallow soil where the roots cannot strike, or as that among thorns which choke all the produce, or finally as that, which, falling on a well-prepared place, yields fruit abundantly. You may try to find hearers who come not under any one of these descriptions, but you will not succeed; whilst, on the other hand, the world has never yet presented an assemblage of mixed hearers, which might not be resolved into these four divisions. And we regard it as an extraordinary evidence of the sagacity, if the expression be lawful, of our Lord, of his superhuman penetration, and of his marvellous facility in condensing volumes into sentences, that he has thus furnished, in few words, a sketch of the whole world in its every age, and given us, within the compass of a dozen lines, the moral history of our race, as acted on by the preaching of the Gospel.

We make this reference to the parable of the sower, because we consider it rivalled in its comprehensiveness, and the unvarying accuracy of its descriptions, by the portion of Holy writ on which we now purpose to discourse. We do not mean that the two sons can represent the whole world, or the whole Church, in the same manner or degree as the four classes of hearers. There would manifestly be a contradiction in this; for if there be four parts into which the whole may be divided, it were absurd to contend for the equal propriety of a division into two. But we never-

theless believe that two very large classes of persons, subsisting in every age of the Church, are represented by the two sons, and that therefore, in delivering the Parable before us, as well as that of the sower, Christ displayed his more than human acquaintance with mankind, and his power of delineating, by the simplest figures, the reception of his Gospel to the very end of time. All this however will become more evident, as we proceed with the exposition of the passage, and shew you, as we think to do, that Centuries have made no difference in the faithfulness of the sketch.

You will observe that the Parable, or illustration, or real history—for it matters little which term you assign to this portion of Scripture—is introduced by our Lord, whilst holding a discourse with the Priests and elders in the Temple. They had come round him, demanding by what authority he acted—as though he had not given sufficiently clear proof that his mission was from God. Where the demand was so unreasonable, Jesus would not vouchsafe a direct answer. He therefore made his reply conditional on their telling him whether the baptism of John was from Heaven, or of men. He thus brought them into a dilemma from which no sophistry could extricate them. If they allowed the divine character of John's baptism, they laid themselves open to the charge of gross inconsistency, in not having believed him, and in denying the Messiahship of him whom he heralded. But if, on the other hand, they uttered what they really

thought, and affirmed John's baptism to have been of men, they felt that they should excite the multitude against themselves, inasmuch as the people held the Baptist for a Prophet. They therefore thought it most prudent to pretend ignorance, and to declare themselves unable to decide whence the baptism was. Hence, the condition on which Christ had promised to answer their question not having been fulfilled, they could not press him with any further enquiry, but remained in the position of disappointed and baffled antagonists.

It consisted not however with the Saviour's character, that he should content himself with gaining a triumph over opponents, as though he had reasoned only for the sake of display. He had severely mortified his bitterest enemies, by turning their weapons against themselves, and bringing them into a strait, in which they were exposed to the contempt of the bystanders. But it was their good which he sought; and when, therefore, he had silenced them, he would not let slip the opportunity of setting before them their condition, and adding another warning to the many which had been uttered in vain. The declaration of ignorance in regard of John's baptism, suggested the course which his remonstrance should take, according to his well-known custom of allowing the occasion to furnish the topic of his preaching. He delivers the parable which forms our subject of discourse, and immediately follows it up by the question, "whether of them twain did the will of his Father?" There was no room

here for either doubt or evasion. It was so manifest that the son, who had refused at first, but who had afterwards repented and gone to the vineyard, was more obedient than the other, who had made a profession of willingness, but never redeemed his promise, that even priests and elders could not avoid giving a right decision. And now Christ shewed what his motive had been in delivering the parable, and proposing the question; for so soon as he had obtained their testimony in favour of the first son, he said to them, "Verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you."

We gather at once, from this startling and severe saying, that, by the second son in the Parable, Christ intended the leading men among the Jews, and, by the first, those despised and profligate ranks with which Pharisees and scribes would not hold the least intercourse. The publicans and harlots, as he goes on to observe, had received John the Baptist; for numbers had repented at his preaching. But the Priests and elders, according to their own confession just made, had not acknowledged him as coming from God, and had not been brought by him to amendment of life. And this was precisely the reverse of what the profession of the several parties had given right to expect. The Priests and elders, making a great shew of religion, and apparently eager expectants of the promised Messiah, seemed only to require to be directed to the vineyard, and they would immediately and cheerfully go. On the other hand, the publicans and harlots, persons of



grossly immoral and profligate habits, might be said to declare, by their lives, an obstinate resolve to continue in disobedience, so that, if told to go work in the vineyard, their answer would be a contemptuous refusal. Yet when the matter came to be put to the proof, the result was widely different from what appearances had promised. The great men amongst the Jews, whose whole profession was that of parties waiting to know, that they might perform, God's will, were bidden by the Baptist to receive Jesus as their Saviour; but, notwithstanding all their promises, they treated him as a deceiver, and would not join themselves to his disciples. The same message was delivered to the publicans and harlots; but these, whatever the reluctance which they manifested at first, came in crowds to hear Jesus, and took by force the Kingdom of Heaven. And all this was aptly illustrated by the parable before us. The great men were the second son; for they had said, "I go, Sir," and yet they went not: the publicans and harlots were the first son; for though, when bidden, they refused, yet afterwards they repented and went.

Such was evidently the import and design of the Parable, as originally delivered by Jesus. It is possible indeed that there may have been also a reference to the Jew and the Gentile; the two sons representing, as they elsewhere do, these two great divisions of mankind. The Jews, as a nation, were aptly figured by the second son, the Gentiles by the first. Both had the same father—seeing that, however close the union between God and

the Jews, and however the Gentiles had been left, for Centuries, to themselves, there was no difference in origin, inasmuch as the whole race had the same Lord for its parent. And the Jews stood ready to welcome their Messiah; whereas little could be expected from the Gentiles, sunk as they were in ignorance and superstition, but that, if directed to a Saviour, they would treat with contempt the free offer of life. Here again however the event was the reverse of the expectation. The Gospel made little way amongst the Jews, where there had been every promise of a cordial reception; but rapidly overran the Gentile world, where there had seemed least likelihood of its gaining any ground. So that once more the Parable, if taken in the light of a Prophecy, was accurately fulfilled. The Jew, as the second son, had promised to go and work in the vineyard, and then never went: the Gentile, as the first son, had peremptorily refused, but afterwards saw his error, and repented, and obeyed.

But whilst there may be great justice in thus giving the Parable a national, or temporary, application, our chief business is to treat it, according to our introductory remarks, as descriptive of two classes in every age of the Church. It is this which we shall now proceed to do, believing that it furnishes, in a more than common degree, the material of interesting and instructive discourse.

Now it is a very frequent image in Scripture, that which represents the Church of Christ as a vineyard, and ourselves as labourers who have been hired to work in that vineyard. We shall

not, on the present occasion, enlarge on this image; nor take pains to shew you its beauty and fidelity. We shall find enough to engage us in the other parts of the Parable, and may therefore assume what you are probably all prepared to admit. We go then at once to the message which is delivered to each of the sons, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." It is precisely the message, which, Sabbath after Sabbath, is uttered in God's name by the ordained ministers of Christ. We are never at liberty to make you any offers for to-morrow, but must always tell you, that, "if to-day you will hear his voice," he is ready to receive you into the vineyard of his Church. And it is not to a life of inactivity and idleness that we are bidden to summon you, not to that inert dependence on the merits of another which shall exclude all necessity for personal striving. We call you, on the contrary, to work in the vineyard. If you think to be saved without labour; if you imagine, that, because Christ has done all that is necessary in the way of merit, there remains nothing to be done by yourselves in the way of condition, you are yielding to a delusion which must be as wilful as it will be fatal—the whole tenour of Scripture unreservedly declaring, that, if you would enter into life, you must "work out your Salvation with fear and trembling." And thus the message, "Son, go, work to-day in my vineyard," is in every respect that which God is continually addressing to you through the mouth of his ministering servants, a message declaratory that "now is the accepted time," and requiring you to put forth

every energy that you may escape "the wrath to come."

And now the question is, as to the reception with which this message meets; and whether there be not two great classes of its hearers who are accurately represented by the two sons in the Parable. We do not pretend to affirm, as we have already intimated, that the whole mass of unconverted men may fairly be resolved under the two divisions thus figuratively drawn. We are well aware of the prevalence of an indifference and apathy, which can hardly be roused to any kind of answer, either to a specious promise, made only to be broken, or to a harsh refusal which may perhaps be turned into compliance. But without pretending to include all under these divisions, we may and do believe that the multitude is very large which may be thus defined and classified. We suppose, that, after all, most way is made by the preachers of the Gospel, where there seems least prospect of success; and that, as it was in the days when Christ was on earth, those who promise fairest give most disappointment, whilst the harvest is reaped where we looked only for sterility. This however is a matter which should be carefully examined, and we shall therefore employ the remainder of our discourse in considering separately the cases of the two sons, beginning with that of the second, who said, "I go, Sir, and went not," and then proceeding to that of the first, who said, "I will not, but afterward he repented, and went."

Now there is in many men a warmth of natural feeling, and a great susceptibility, which make them promising subjects for any stirring and touching appeal. They are easily excited; and both their fears and sympathies will readily answer to a powerful address, or a sorrowful narrative. They are not made of that harsh stuff which seems the predominant element in many men's constitutions; but, on the contrary, are yielding and malleable, as though the moral artificer might work them, without difficulty, into what shape he would. We are well convinced that there are many who answer this description in every Congregation, and therefore in the present. It is far from our feeling, that, when we put forth all our earnestness in some appeal to the conscience, or come down upon you with our warmest entreaty, that you would accept the deliverance proposed by the Gospel, we are heard on all sides with coldness and indifference. We have quite the opposite feeling. We do not doubt, that, as the appeal goes forward, and the entreaty is pressed, there are some who are conscious of a warmth of sentiment, and a melting of heart; and in whom there is excited so much of a determination to forsake sin, and obey God; that, if we could ply each with the command, "go, work to-day in my vineyard," we should receive a promise of immediate compliance.

It is not that these men, or these women, are undergoing a change of heart; though there may be that in the feelings thus excited, which, fairly followed out, would lead to a thorough renova-

tion. It is only that they are made of a material, on which it is very easy to work; but which, alas, if it have great facility in receiving impressions, may have just as much in allowing them to be effaced. And what is done by a faithful sermon is done also by Providential dispensations, when God addresses these parties through some affliction or bereavement. If you visit them, when death has entered their households, you find nothing of the harshness and reserve of sullen grief; but all that openness to counsel, and all that readiness to own the mercy of the judgment, which seem indicative of such a softening of the heart as promises to issue in its genuine conversion. If you treat the chastisement, under which they labour, as a message from God, and translate it thus into common language, "Son, go, work to-day in my vineyard," you meet with no signs of dislike or reluctance, but rather with a ready assent that you give the true meaning, and with a frank resolution that God shall not speak in vain.

We put it to yourselves to determine whether we are not describing a common case; whether, if you could dissect our Congregations, you would not find a large mass of persons, who seem quite accessible to moral attack; whom you may easily startle by a close address to the conscience, or overcome by a pathetic and plaintive description; and on whom when affliction falls, it falls with that subduing and penetrating power, which gives room for hope that it will bring them to repentance. And wheresoever these cases occur, they

may evidently, so far as we have gone, be identified with that of the second son in the Parable; for, whilst the address to the parties is one which urges to the working in the vineyard, their answer has all the promise, and all the respectfulness, contained in the "I go, Sir" of our text.

But the accuracy of the delineation does not end here. We must follow these excited listeners from the place of assembling, and these subdued mourners from the scene of affliction. Alas, how soon is it apparent that what is easily roused may be as easily lulled; and that you have only to remove the incumbent weight, and the former figure is regained. The men who have been all attention to the preacher, whom he seemed to have brought completely under command, so that they were ready to follow him whithersoever he would lead, settle back into their listlessness, when the stimulant of the sermon is withdrawn; and those, whom the fires of calamity appeared to have melted, harden rapidly into their old constitution, when time has somewhat damped the intenseness of the flame. The melancholy truth is, that the whole assault has been on their natural sensibilities, on their animal feelings; and that nothing like spiritual solicitude has been produced, whether by the sermon or the sorrow. They have given much cause for hope, seeing they have displayed susceptibility, and thus shewn themselves capable of moral impressions. But they have disappointed expectation, because they have taken no pains to distinguish between an instinct of nature and a work of God's Spirit, or rather,

because they have allowed their feelings to evaporate in the forming a resolution, and have not set themselves prayerfully to the carrying it into effect. And thus it comes to pass, that men, on whom preaching seemed to have taken great hold, as though they were moved by the terrors, and animated by the hopes, of Christianity; or whom the visitations of Providence appeared to have brought to humility and contrition; make no advances in the religion of the heart, but falsify the hopes which those who wish their Salvation have ventured to cherish. And when surprize is expressed, and the reason is demanded, the only reply is, that there is yet a large class in the world, too faithfully delineated by the second son, who, when bidden by his father to go work in the vineyard, answered "I go, Sir," and went not.

You may think however that we have not adduced precisely the case intended by the Parable, inasmuch as these susceptible, but unstable, persons are not of the same class with the chief priests and elders. The second son was originally designed to denote the leading men among the Jews; and, therefore, in seeking his present representatives, we seem bound to look for similarity to those to whom Christ addressed the Parable. This is so far true, that, although it impeaches not the accuracy of what has been advanced, it makes it necessary for us to continue our examination, lest we bring within too narrow limits the class of men described.

We have already hinted that there lie the greatest obstacles to the reception of the Gospel, where, at first sight, we might have hoped for most rapid



success. Thus with the chief Priests and Pharisees. There was the most rigid attention to all the externals of religion, a professed readiness to submit to the revealed will of God, and an apparent determination to receive Christ, so soon as he should be manifested. Yet all this, as we have shewn you, was nothing more than the saying, "I go, Sir;" for when the Christ actually came, they were displeased at his lowliness, and would not join him as their King and their Saviour. And we are bound to say that we know not more unpromising subjects for the preaching of the Gospel, than those who are punctiliously attentive to the forms of religion, and who attach a worth and a merit to their careful performance of certain moral duties. We cannot have a more unpalatable truth to deliver—but woe is unto us, if we dare to keep it back—than that which exposes the utter insufficiency of the best human righteousness, and which tells men, who are amiable and charitable and moral and upright, that, with all their excellencies, they may be further from the Kingdom of Heaven, than the dissolute whom they regard with absolute loathing. The immediate feeling is, that we confound virtue and vice; and that, allowing no superiority to what is lovely and of good report, we represent God as indifferent to moral conduct, and thus undermine the foundations on which society rests. But we are open to no such charge. We are quite alive to the beauty and advantageousness of that moral excellence, which does not spring from a principle of religion, nay, which may even oppose the admission of the pecu-

liar doctrines of Christianity. There is not a man for whom we have a greater feeling of interest, because there is not one of whom naturally we have a greater admiration, than for him who is passing through life with an unblemished reputation, sedulously attentive to all the relative duties, and taking generously the lead in efforts to ameliorate the condition of his fellows, but who, all the while, has no consciousness of his own sinfulness, and who therefore rests on his own works, and not on Christ's merits. If you compare this man with a dissolute character, one who is outraging the laws of society and the feelings of humanity; and if you judge the two merely with reference to the present scene of being; why, there is the widest possible difference; and to speak of the one as equally depraved, and equally vile, with the other, would be an overcharged statement, carrying its own confutation.

But what is there to prove, that there may not be just as much rebellion against God in the one case as in the other; and that the man, whose whole deportment is marked by what is praiseworthy and beneficial, may not be as void of all love towards the author of his being, as he who, by his vices and villainy, draws upon himself the execrations of a neighbourhood? Try men as members of society, and they are as widely separated as the poles of the earth. But try them as God's creatures, not their own, but "bought with a price," and you may bring them to the same level, or even prove the moral and amiable further alienated than the dissolute and repulsive. Yes, further alienated.

It is a hard saying, but we cannot pare it away. These upright and charitable men, on whom a world is lavishing its applause, how will they receive us, when we come and tell them that they are sinners, who have earned for themselves eternal destruction; and that they are no more secured against the ruin by their rectitude and philanthropy, than if they were the slaves of every vice, and the patrons of every crime? May we not speak of, at least, a high probability, that they will be disgusted at a statement which makes so light of their excellence; and that they will turn away from the doctrines of the Gospel, as too humiliating to be true, or as only constructed for the very refuse of mankind?

Oh, we again say that we hardly know a more hopeless task, than that of bringing the Gospel to bear on an individual who is trenched about with self-righteousness. If we are dealing with the openly immoral man, we can take the thunders of the law, and batter at his conscience. We know well enough, that, in his case, there is a voice within which answers to the voice from without; and that, however he may harden himself against our remonstrance, there is, at least, no sophistry by which he can persuade himself that he is not a sinner. This is a great point secured: we occupy a vantage-ground, from which we may direct, with full power, all our moral artillery. But when we deal with the man, who is amiable and estimable and exemplary, but who, nevertheless, is a stranger to the motives of the Gospel, our very first assertion—for this must be our first;

we cannot advance a step till this preliminary is felt and conceded—the assertion, that the man is a sinner, deserving only Hell, arms against us his every antipathy, and is almost certain to call up such a might of opposition, that we are at once repulsed as unworthy further hearing.

And how agrees this too frequent case with the sketching of our Parable? We look upon men, whose virtues make them the ornaments of society, and whose zealous attention to the various duties of life, deservedly secures them respect and esteem. You would gather from their deportment, from their apparent readiness to discharge faithfully every known obligation, that the setting before them what God requires at their hands would suffice to secure their unwearied obedience. If you say to them, in the name of the Almighty, “Son, go work to-day in my vineyard,” their answer, as furnished by all that seeming desire to act rightly which has forced itself on your attention, is one of sincere and hearty compliance. But so soon as they come to know what working in the vineyard means, alas, it is with them as it was with the Pharisees and Scribes, who, with every profession that they waited for Messiah, no sooner saw him “without form or comeliness,” than they scornfully refused to give him their allegiance. These self-righteous men are ready enough to work, because it is by works of their own that they think to gain Heaven. But when they find that their great work, is to be the renouncing their own works, and that the vineyard, in which you invite them to labour, is one in which man’s chief toil

is to humble himself, that Christ may be exalted—this gives the matter altogether a new aspect; they would labour at building the tower of Babel, but they have no idea of labouring at pulling it down.

And thus does it come to pass, that the Ministers of the Gospel are repulsed with a more than common vehemence; and that their message is thrown back, as though the delivering it had been an insult. We can but mourn over men, who, with every thing to recommend them to their fellows, honourable in their dealings, large in their charities, true in their friendships, are yet dishonest to themselves and false to their God—dishonest to themselves, for they put a cheat on their souls; false to their God, for they give him not what he asks, and all else is worse than nothing. Yes, we could lament, with a deeper than the ordinary lamentation which should be poured over every lost soul, when integrity and generosity and patriotism and disinterestedness, all beautiful and splendid things, have only helped to confirm men in rejection of the Gospel, and have strengthened that dislike to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, which is natural to the heart, but which must be expelled, else we perish. And when we are asked whether it can indeed be, that men, so amiable and admirable, who have a yearning heart for every tale of sorrow, and an open hand for every case of destitution, and an instinctive aversion to whatever is mean and degrading, are treading the downward path which leads to the chambers of everlasting death, we can only say that the very qualities which seem to you to mark

a fitness for Heaven, have prevented the passage through that strait gate of the vineyard, which is wide enough for every sinner, but too narrow for any sin; and that thus has been paralleled the whole case of the second son, who said to his father, "I go, Sir," and went not.

And now we must have said enough to convince you that the delineation of our Parable is not local or temporary, but may justly be extended to all ages of the Church. We make this assertion, because though, as yet, we have only examined the case of one son, our remarks have had an indirect bearing on that of the other. We have shewn you that the obstacles to the reception of the truths of the Gospel are often greatest, where appearances seem to augur the readiest welcome. Where the promise is most freely given, how frequently is the performance withheld. And though the converse of this may not be necessarily true, namely, that, where we have refusal at first, we may expect ultimate compliance, yet, undoubtedly, the case of the second son prepares us to feel no surprize at that of the first. If there be final refusal, where there is most of present consent, it can be no ways strange that there should be final consent, where there is most of present refusal.

This it is which is represented to us in the instance of the first son. His father came to him, and said, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." "He answered, and said, I will not; but afterward he repented and went." There could be nothing more discourteous, as well as nothing more peremptory, than the reply. He addresses his

father with nothing of that respectful language which the second son used, and which might at least have softened the refusal. There is a harshness, and bluntness, in the answer, which, independently on the disobedience, proved him of a churlish and unmanageable temper. And we know, from the application which Christ himself made of the Parable, that this first son is the representative of those more depraved and profligate characters, who make no profession of religion, but treat it with open contempt. There are many who will even go the length of boldly proclaiming their resolve to live "without God in the world," who glory in their shame; and who think it for their credit, as marking a free and unshackled spirit, that they have got rid of the restraints which the dread of future punishment imposes. Others again, who have not hardened themselves to this desperate degree, seem yet wholly inaccessible to warning and reproof; for they have, at least, persuaded themselves that they shall have a long lease of life, and that it will be soon enough at the eleventh hour to go and work in the vineyard. And in all such cases, whether we meet with the contemptuousness of unblushing immorality, or the coldness of determined indifference, we have the unqualified refusal which the first son gave his father—sometimes in a harsher, and at other times in a milder tone—but always the "I will not," which seems to preclude all hope of obedience.

These are the cases which seem most calculated to dispirit a Minister; for it is even more disheartening, to find that he makes no impression,

than that, where it has been made, it has been quickly effaced. It is manifestly only the treacherous nature of the surface, which is in fault in the latter case; but, in the former, he may fear that much of the blame is chargeable on his own want of energy in wielding his weapons. He may even, in moments of despondency, be wrought into a suspicion that these weapons are not as mighty as he had been instructed to believe. And therefore it is a marvellously cheering thing, to be told of the first son, that "afterward he repented and went." We do not believe that the precious seed of the word is all lost, because there is no immediate harvest. We remember that great principle in God's dealings, which is announced by St Paul, "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it first die." It is often, we are persuaded, in spiritual things, as it is always in natural—the grain is long buried, and, to all appearance, lost; but then suddenly come the signs of vegetation, and the soil is pierced by the fresh green blade.

We now address ourselves to those amongst you who have never entered the vineyard, who have never broken up the fallow ground, and sown to themselves in righteousness. We know not whether the number, who fall under this description, be great or small; nor whether it be mainly composed of those living in open sin, or of those who are only indifferent to the high claims of religion. But we say to these men, and these women, go, work to-day in the vineyard. We call upon them, and entreat them, that, whilst God yet



strives with them by his Spirit, and the free offer of Salvation is made them in his name, they would consider their ways, and turn unto the Lord, lest the evil day come upon them "as a thief." We anticipate what will be practically their answer. There may indeed be a solitary exception. Even now may there be the casting down of some strong-hold of unbelief; and there may be one in this assembly, in whom our word is working energetically, convincing him of sin, and persuading him to make trial of Christ's power to save. But from the mass of those whom the first son represents, we can look for nothing but his answer: and if we could single out the individuals, and bid them to the vineyard, "I will not" would be but too faithful an account of their reply. And yet we do not necessarily conclude that we have laboured in vain. Oh no, far enough from this. The word, which we have spoken, may in many cases have gained a lodgment, though long years may elapse ere it put forth its vigour. If we could follow, through the remainder of their lives, those with whom we now seem to plead wholly in vain, we can feel that we should find a day breaking upon some of them, full of the memory of this very hour and this very sermon; and perceive that one cause or another had suddenly acted on the seed now sown, so that what we supposed dead was rapidly germinating. It is marvellous how often, in sickness or in sorrow, there will rush into the mind some long-forgotten text, some sentence, which was little heeded when first heard, but which settled itself down in the inner

man, to wait a time when, like the characters which a mysterious hand traced before the Assyrian in his revels, it might flash dismay through every chamber of the spirit. The father's bidding, "go work to-day in my vineyard," will rise into remembrance with a sudden and overcoming energy; it may not have been heard for years, it may not have been thought of for years; but when the man is brought low, and health is failing him, and friends are forsaking him, he will seem to hear it, not less distinctly, and far more thrillingly, articulated, than when it fell disregarded from the lips of the preacher; and he will wonder at his own perverseness, and weep over his infatuation.

We are sketching to you no imaginary case, but one which all, who have opportunities of reading men's spiritual histories, will tell you is of frequent occurrence. The son who harshly says, "I will not," remembers the command and the refusal on some long after day, repents of his sinfulness, and hastens to the vineyard. The pathetic remonstrance of a parent with a dissolute child is not necessarily thrown away, because that child persists in his dissoluteness: it may come up, with all the touching tones of the well remembered voice, when the parent has long lain in the grave, and work remorse and contrition in the prodigal. The bold address of the minister to some slave of sensuality is not necessarily ineffectual, because its object departs unmoved and unchanged, and breaks not away from the base thralldom in which he is held. That address may

ring in his ears, as though unearthly voices syllabled its words, when the minister's tongue has long been mute. "He, being dead, yet speaketh," are words which experience marvellously verifies in regard of those whose office it is to rebuke vice, and animate to righteousness. They may be verified in the instance of some one who now hears me. I feel so encouraged by the account of the first son, that I could even dare to prophesy the history of one or more in this assembly. There may be some to whom I never before preached the Gospel, and to whom I may never preach it again. I speak in ignorance. I know not how far this may be true on the present occasion. But I can imagine, that, in the throng which surrounds me, there is one to whom I speak for the first time, and who will never see me again, till we meet at the Judgment seat of Christ. He may be in the vigour of his youth, life opening attractively before him, and the world wearing all that freshness and fairness with which it beguiles the unwary. And he will have no ear for the summonses of religion. It is in the name of the God of the whole earth that I conjure him to mortify the flesh, and fasten his affections on things above. It is by his own majesty, his own dignity, as an immortal being, that I would stir him to the abandoning all low pursuits, and engaging in the sublime duties of righteousness. But he will not be persuaded. He has made his election: and, when he departs from the house of God, it will be to return to the scenes and companions of his thoughtlessness and

dissipation. Yet I do not despair of this man. I do not conclude my labour thrown away. I am looking forward to an hour, which may be yet very distant, when experience will have taught him the worthlessness of what he now seeks, or a broken constitution have incapacitated him for his most cherished pleasures. The hour may not come whilst I am on the earth; I may have long before departed, and a stranger may be ministering in my place. But I shall be in that man's chamber, and I shall stand at his bedside, and I shall repeat my now despised exhortation. There will be, as it were, a Resurrection of the present scene, and the present sermon. The words, which now hardly gain a hearing, but which, nevertheless, are burying themselves in the recesses of the mind, that they may wait an appointed season, will be spoken to the very soul, and penetrate to the quick, and produce that godly sorrow which worketh repentance. And when you ask me upon what I am bold enough to ground such a prophecy, and from what data I venture to predict, that my sermon shall not die, but, though long forgotten, start finally into power and persuasiveness—my reply is, that the case of the first son in the Parable must have cases which correspond to it in all ages of the Church, and that we read of this Son, that, though he refused, when bidden, to work in the vineyard, yet “afterward he repented and went.”

There are two cautions, suggested by this latter part of our subject, and with these we would conclude. The first is to parents and guardians

and ministers ; in short, to all whose business it may be to counsel and instruct. Let not the apparent want of success induce you to relax in your endeavours. You see that he who gives you a flat refusal, may ultimately reward you better than he who gives you a fair promise. Be not, therefore, disheartened ; but rather act on the wise man's advice, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand ; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

Our second caution is to those who may be ready, with the first son, to give a direct refusal, when bidden to go and work in the vineyard. Let not the thought, that you may afterwards repent, encourage you in your determination that you will not yet obey. The man who presumes on what is told us of the first son, will never, in all probability, be represented by that son. I may have hopes of a man whose moral slumbers I cannot at all break ; I almost despair of a man, whom I can so far awaken that he makes a resolution to delay. The determining to put off, is the worst of all symptoms : it shews that conscience has been roused, and then pacified ; and woe unto the man, who has drugs with which he can lull conscience to sleep. Again therefore we tell you that the exhortation of the text is limited as to time. "Go, work to-day in my vineyard." To-morrow, the pulse may be still, and there is "no work nor wisdom in the grave." To-day, ye are yet amongst the living, and may enroll yourselves with the labourers whose harvest shall be Immortality.

## SERMON VI.

THE DISPERSION AND RESTORATION OF THE JEWS\*.

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ST MATTHEW. XXIII. 37, 38, 39.

*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

THESE words occur in the Gospel of St Luke, as well as in that of St Matthew; but the times of delivery were undoubtedly different. As given by St Luke, they form part of Christ's answer to certain Pharisees, who had come to him with intelligence that Herod sought to kill him. At this time, as it would seem, our Saviour was making his last circuit of Galilee, before his arrival at Jerusalem at the fourth passover. But, as given by St Matthew, the words appear to have been the last which Christ uttered in public, having been delivered just before his final departure from the Temple, on the evening, most

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probably, of the Wednesday in Passion-week. You cannot have any doubt, if you compare the passages in the two Evangelists, that the words were uttered on very different occasions, so that, if what they contain of Prophecy may have had a seeming accomplishment between the two deliveries, we should still have to search for an ampler fulfilment.

We make this remark, because, as you must all remember, when Christ made his public entry into Jerusalem from Bethany, a few days before his Crucifixion, he was attended by a great multitude who saluted him in the language of our text. "And they that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Had our text been found only in St Luke, delivered on an occasion which preceded the triumphant reception of Christ, it might have been argued that what occurred at this reception fulfilled all its Prophecy. Yet it would then have been easy to shew that Christ must have referred to some more permanent reception of himself than that given by an inconstant multitude, who, within a few days, were as vehement in demanding his Crucifixion, as they had been in shouting Hosanna. We are however spared the necessity of advancing, or pressing, this argument, inasmuch as the words, as recorded by St Matthew, were uttered subsequently to Christ's entry into Jerusalem, and could not, therefore, have been fulfilled by that event.

It should further be remarked, that the saying, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the

Lord," is taken from a Psalm, the 118th, which the Jews themselves interpreted of the Christ. It is the Psalm in which are found the remarkable words, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner"—words which Jesus brought to bear on the chief Priests and scribes, when they deprecated the taking the vineyard from the unfaithful husbandmen. We may therefore suppose, that, in quoting from this Psalm, the people designed to express their belief that Jesus was Messiah. We may further suppose, that, in declaring that Jerusalem should not see him again, till ready to apply to him the words he adduced, our Lord had respect to some future acknowledgment of his kingly pretensions.

We wish you to bear carefully with you these preliminary observations, as necessary to the settling the right interpretation of our text. Whatever may be your opinion of the import of the passage, as delivered by St Luke, you can hardly fail to allow, that, as delivered by St Matthew, it can have respect to no events recorded in the Gospels. The words were uttered by Christ, when concluding his public ministry: he left the Temple so soon as he had pronounced them, and never again entered its precincts. We are, therefore, to take the text as Christ's parting address to his unbelieving countrymen; so that, in whatever degree they are prophetic, in that same degree must they belong to occurrences which were to follow his departure from earth.

Now it will be admitted by you all, that there is something singularly pathetic in the text, when



thus regarded as the last words of Christ to the Jews. The Saviour is taking his farewell of those whom he had striven, by every means, to lead to repentance. He had wrought the most wonderful miracles, and appealed to them in proof that he came forth from God. He had delivered the most persuasive discourses, setting forth, under variety of imagery, the ruin that would follow his being rejected, and offering the largest blessings to all who would come to him as a deliverer. But all had been in vain: and he knew that the time was at hand, when the measure of guilt would be filled up, and their Messiah be crucified by the Jews. Yet he would not depart without another and a bolder remonstrance. The Chapter, of which our text is the conclusion, and which, as we have already stated, is the parting sermon of Christ, is without parallel in the Gospels for indignant rebuke, and emphatic denunciation. The Preacher seems, for a while, to have laid aside his meekness, and to have assumed the character of a stern herald of wrath. And I know not that there is any where to be found such a specimen of lofty and withering eloquence. You cannot read it without emotions of awe, and almost of fear. Confronted by those who, he knew, thirsted for his blood, Christ intrepidly charged them with their crimes, and predicted their punishment. Had he been invested with all human authority, in place of standing as a defenceless and despised individual, he could not have uttered a sterner and more heartsearching invective. The marvel is, that his enemies should have allowed

him to pour forth his tremendous oratory, that they did not fall upon him, without regard to the sacredness of the place, and take a fierce and summary revenge. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" is the burden of his address: he reiterates the woe, till the Temple walls must have rung with the ominous syllables. And then he bids the nation fill up the measure of their fathers. Their fathers had slain the prophets, and made great advances towards that ripeness of iniquity, which was to mark the land out as ready for vengeance. But the national guilt was not yet complete. There was a crime by which the children were to outdo, and, at the same time, consummate the sinfulness of their fathers. And Christ calls them to the perpetration of this crime. They were bent on accomplishing his death—let them nail him to the cross, and then would their guiltiness reach its height, and the accumulated vengeance descend with a wild and overwhelming might. "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation."

And here the Saviour might be said to have exhausted threatening; for what denunciation could be more tremendous, or more comprehensive? We may picture him to ourselves, launching this terrible sentence, a more than human fire in his eye, and a voice more deep-toned and thrilling than ever issued from mortal lips. I know of

nothing that would be more sublime and commanding in representation, if there could be transferred to the canvass the vivid delineations of thought, than the scene thus enacted in the Temple. We figure the Redeemer undaunted by the menacing looks, and half-suppressed murmurs, of the fierce throng by which he was surrounded. He becomes more and more impassioned in his eloquence, rising from one bold rebuke to another, and throwing into his language a greater and greater measure of reproachfulness and defiance. And when he has compelled his hearers to shrink before the rush of his invective, he assumes the Prophetic office, and, as though armed with all the thunders of divine wrath, announces authoritatively the approach of unparalleled desolation. This is the moment we would seize for delineation—though what pencil can think to portray the lofty bearing, the pre-eminent dignity, the awful glance, the terribleness, yet magnificence, of gesture, which must have characterized the Mediator, when, wrought up into all the ardency of superhuman zeal, he brake into the overwhelming malediction, “Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation?”

But if the scene of this moment defy the painter’s art, what shall we say of that of the succeeding? No sooner had Christ reached that height of intrepid vehemence, at which we have just beheld him, than he gave way to a burst of tenderness, and changed the language of invective for that of lamentation. At one moment he is dealing out the arrows of a stern and lace-

rating oratory, and, the next, he is melted into tears, and can find no words but those of anguish and regret. Indeed it is a transition more exquisitely beautiful than can be found in the most admired specimens of human eloquence; and we feel that there must have passed a change over the countenance, and the whole bearing, of the Saviour, which imagination cannot catch, and which, if it could, the painter could not fix. There must have risen before him the imagery of a wrath and a wretchedness, such as had never yet overtaken any nation of the earth. And the people, that should be thus signalled out, were his countrymen, his kinsmen after the flesh, over whom his heart yearned, and whom he had affectionately laboured to convince of danger, and conduct to safety. He felt therefore, we may believe, a sudden and excruciating sorrow, so that the judgments, which he foretold, pressed on his own Spirit, and caused him deep agony. He was too pure a being, and he loved with too abiding and disinterested a love, to harbour any feeling allied with revenge; and therefore, though it was for rejecting himself that those whom he addressed were about to be punished, he could not contemplate the punishment but with bitterness and anguish.

And hence the rapid and thrilling change from the preacher of wrath to the mourner over suffering. Hence the sudden laying aside of all his awful vehemence, and the breaking into pathetic and heart-touching expressions. Oh, you feel that the Redeemer must have been subdued, as it were,

and mastered, by the view of the misery which he saw coming on Judea, and by the remembrance of all he had done to avert it from the land, ere he could have passed thus instantaneously from indignant rebuke to exquisite tenderness. And it cannot, we think, be without mingled emotions of awe and delight, that you mark the transition from the herald of vengeance to the sympathizer with the wretched. Just as you are shrinking from the, fierce and withering denunciations, almost scathed by the fiery eloquence which glares and flashes with the anger of the Lord—just as you are expecting a new burst of threatening, a further and wilder malediction from the voice which seems to shake the magnificent Temple—there is heard the sound as of one who is struggling with sorrow; and in a tone of rich plaintiveness, in accents musical in their sadness, and betraying the agony of a stricken spirit, there fall upon you these touching and penetrating words, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.”

But there is so much of important matter in this and the following verses, that it is time that we confine ourselves to considering the statements here made by Christ. We may arrange these statements under three divisions. Under the first, we shall have to consider what had been done for Jerusalem; under the second, the consequences to the Jews of their rejecting the Christ; and under the third, the future conversion of this unbelieving people.

Now you must be quite prepared for our regarding the Jews as a typical nation, so that, in God's dealings with them, we may read, as in a glass, his dealings with his Church, whether collectively or individually. You must be aware that the history of the Israelites is full of symbolic occurrence; and that, without drawing any forced parallel, the narrative may be transferred, in various of its parts, to our own day and generation, and be used as descriptive of what occurs amongst Christians. You will not, therefore, be surprized, if we consider Christ's remonstrance with Jerusalem, as every way applicable to the impenitent of later times, and as affirming nothing in regard of the Jews, which may not be affirmed, with equal truth, of many amongst ourselves. There had been much done for Jerusalem; and it is in exquisitely moving terms that Christ states his own willingness to have sheltered that city. But herein, we are assured, Jerusalem was but the representative of individual transgressors, so that the very same words might be addressed to any amongst us, who have obstinately withstood the motions of God's Spirit, and the invitations of his Gospel. We cannot indeed be said to have killed the Prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto us. But if we have resisted the engines, whatever they may have been, through which God has carried on the moral attack; if we have turned a deaf ear to the Prophet and the Messenger, and thus done our part towards frustrating their mission; then we are virtually in the same position as Jerusalem, and may regard our-

selves as addressed in the language of our text.

And when the verse is thus withdrawn from its merely national application, and we consider it as capable of being exemplified in the history of our own lives, it presents such an account of God's dealings with the impenitent, as yields to none in importance and interest. We observe first, that, however unable we may be to reconcile the certainty of a foreknown destruction, with the possibility of avoiding it, we are bound to believe, on the testimony of our text, that no man's doom is so fixed that it may not be averted by repentance. It may appear to us, that, all along, the destruction of Jerusalem had been a settled thing in the purposes of the Almighty; and that God's plans were so arranged on the supposition of the final infidelity of the Jews, that they could not have allowed a final belief in the Christ. Yet Christ declares of Jerusalem, that he would often have gathered her children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; and that only their own wilful infidelity had prevented his sheltering them from every outbreak of wrath. We cannot, therefore, doubt that it was quite within the power of the Jews, to have repented; and that, had they hearkened to the voice of the Saviour, they would have escaped all that punishment, which appears so predetermined, that, to suppose it remitted is to suppose God's plans thwarted. We fully admit that the Saviour must have known that those, whom he called, would not obey. But there is all the dif-

ference between saying that they could not obey, and that they would not obey. In saying that they could not obey, we make them the subjects of some hidden decree, which placed an impassable barrier between themselves and repentance, and which therefore rendered nugatory, yea, reduced into mere mockery, the warnings and invitations with which they were plied. But in saying that they would not obey, we charge the whole blame on the perverseness of the human will, and suppose a clear space left, notwithstanding the foreknown infidelity, for those remonstrances and persuasions which are wholly out of place, where there is no power of hearkening to the call.

And what we thus hold in regard of Jerusalem, must be equally held in regard of every individual amongst ourselves. We cannot doubt that there is not one in this assembly, whose eternal condition is not as well known to the Almighty, as though it were fixed by an absolute decree. But then it should be carefully observed, that this foreknowledge of God puts no restraint upon man, obliges him not to one course rather than to another, but leaves him as free to choose between life and death, as though the choice must be made, before it could be conjectured. The clouds of vengeance were just ready to burst upon Jerusalem; but the only reason why her children were not sheltered, was that "they would not." Thus with ourselves—God may be as certain of our going down finally into the pit, as though we had already been thrown to destruction; but the single reason, given at the last, why we have not escaped, will be our own



rejection of a proffered deliverance. There is no mystery in this, nothing dark, nothing inscrutable. There is no room for pleading that a divine decree was against us, and that, therefore, Salvation, if nominally offered, was virtually out of reach. It was not out of the reach of Jerusalem, though her grasping it would have apparently deranged the whole scheme of Redemption. And it is not out of the reach of any one of us, however the final impenitence of this or that individual may be fully ascertained by the foreknowledge of God. It is nothing to say that it is impossible for me to do what God knows I shall not do. It is not God's foreknowledge, it is only my own wilfulness, which makes the impossibility. I am not hampered, I am not shackled, by God's foreknowledge: I am every jot as free as though there were no foreknowledge. And thus, without searching into secret things which belong only to God, and yet maintaining in all their integrity the divine attributes, we can apply to every one, who goes on in impenitence, the touching remonstrance of Christ in our text. If such a man reach that moment, which had been reached by Jerusalem, the moment when the day of grace terminates, and the overtures of mercy are brought to a close, the Saviour may say to him, "How often would I have gathered thee under my wings, and thou wouldest not!"

How often! Who is there amongst us unto whom have not been vouchsafed repeated opportunities of knowing the things which belong unto peace? Who, that has not been frequently moved,

by the expostulations of conscience, and the suggestions of God's Spirit, to flee the wrath to come? Who, upon whom the means of grace have not been accumulated, so that, time after time, he has been threatened, and warned, and reasoned with, and besought? How often! I would have gathered thee in thy prosperity, when thou wast spoken to in mercies, and bidden to remember the hand whence they came. I would have gathered thee in thine adversity, when sorrow had softened thine heart, and thou didst look on the right hand, and on the left, for a comforter. How often! By every sermon which thou hast heard, by every death in thy neighbourhood, by every misgiving of soul, by every joy that cheered thee, and by every grief that saddened thee, I have spoken, but thou wouldst not hear, I have called, but thou wouldst not answer. We may be thoroughly assured that there is not one of us, who shall be able to plead at the last, that he was not sufficiently summoned, not sufficiently invited. There is not one of us, who shall be able to charge his perdition on any thing but his own choice. "How often," "how often," will ring in the ear of every man, who remains unconverted beneath the ministry of the Gospel; the remembrance of abused mercies, and slighted means, and neglected opportunities, being as the knell of his unalterable doom. And, oh, as the wicked behold the righteous sheltered beneath the Mediator's protection, from all the fury which gathers and hurries over a polluted Creation, we can believe, that, of all racking thoughts, the most fearful will be, that they too might have

been covered by the same mighty wing, and that had they not chosen exposure to the iron sleet of God's wrath, they too might have rested in peace, whilst the strange work of destruction went forward. Therefore will their own consciences either pass or ratify their sentence. They will shrink down to their fire and their shame, not more compelled by a ministry of vengeance, than torn by a consciousness that they, like the children of Jerusalem, might have often taken shelter under the suretyship of a Redeemer, and that they, like the children of Jerusalem, are naked and defenceless, only because they would not be covered with his feathers.

But we go on to the second topic which is presented to us by the words under review; the consequences to the Jews of their rejecting the Christ. These consequences are, the desolation of their national condition, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," and the judicial blindness which would settle upon them, so that, until a certain period had elapsed, they should not see, and acknowledge, the Saviour. This latter consequence is stated in the concluding verse of the text, "ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"; that is, I shall withdraw myself altogether from you, till a time arrive at which you shall be prepared to welcome me as Messiah. Thus we have a double prophecy of what should befall the Jews; a prophecy of their misery, and a prophecy of their infidelity. And along with this prophecy there is an evident intimation of what has been

the chief characteristic of the Jews, their complete separation, through all their dispersions, from every other people. We derive this intimation from the terms in which their misery is foretold, "Behold; your house is left unto you desolate." It seems as though it had been said, that they were still to have a house, but that house would be desolate; Judea would be their's, but themselves exiles from its provinces. And if the house were to remain appropriated to the Jews, the Jews must remain distinguished from other people; so that what predicts their punishment, predicts also, though in more obscure terms, their being kept apart from the rest of humankind, that they may at length be reinstated in the possession of their fathers.

But we confine ourselves at present to the prediction of their state, as affected by their rejection of Christ. They were to be desolate, but distinct from other people; and an obstinate unbelief was to characterize them, through the whole period of "the times of the Gentiles." And we need hardly tell you of the accuracy, with which such Prophecy has been all along fulfilled. The predictions, which bear reference to the Jews, have this advantage over all other, that their accomplishment may be said to force itself on the notice of the least observant, and not to require, in order to its demonstration, the labour of a learned research. Of all surprizing phenomena, there is perhaps none as wonderful as that of the Jews preserving, through long Centuries, their distinguishing features. It would have been compara-

tively nothing, had the Jews remained in Judea, that they should have continued marked off from every other people. But that they should have been dispersed into all nations, and yet have amalgamated with none; that they should be every where found, and yet be every where the same; that they should submit themselves to all forms of government, and adopt all varieties of customs, and yet be unable, after any lapse of time, to extirpate their national marks; we may pronounce this unparalleled in the history of mankind, and inexplicable but as the fulfilment of Prophecy. If the Jews, though removed from their own land, had been confined to one other, we might have found causes of a protracted distinction, in national antipathies, or legislative enactments. But when the dispersion has been so universal, that, where-soever man treads, the Jew has made his dwelling, and yet the distinction is so abiding, that you may always recognize the Jew for yourself, there is no place left for the explanations which might be given, were the marvel limited to a district or age; and we have before us a miracle, which would not be exceeded, nay, not by the thousandth part equalled, were we privileged to behold the mightiest suspension of the known laws of nature.

Neither is it only in the preservation of their distinguishing characteristics that the Jews are wonderful, and give evidence that Christ prophesied through a more than human foresight. The continued infidelity of the Jews is every jot as surprising as their continued separation. We are

quite at a loss, on any natural principles, to account for their infidelity. It is easy to explain the little way which the Gospel makes amongst the Heathen, but not the far less which it makes amongst the Jews. I may well expect to be met by a most vigorous opposition on the part of the Heathen; for I go to them with a religious system which demands the unqualified rejection of their own; we have scarcely an inch of ground in common; and if I would prevail on them to receive as true what I bring, I must prevail on them to renounce as false what they believe. But the case seems widely different, when my attack is on the Jew. We have a vast deal of common ground. We believe in the same God; we receive the same Scriptures; we look for the same Messiah. There is but one point of debate between us; and that is, whether Jesus of Nazareth were the Christ. And thus the field of argument is surprizingly narrowed; in place of having to fight our way painfully from one principle to another, and of settling all the points of Natural religion, as preliminary to the introduction of the mysteries of Revealed, we can go at once to the single truth at issue between us, and discuss, from writings which we equally receive as inspired, the claims of Jesus to the being Messiah. Surely it might have been expected, that the infidelity of the Jew would have been far more easily overcome than that of the Heathen; and that, in setting ourselves to win converts to Christianity, there would have been a better prospect of gaining credence for the New Testament, where the Old was ac-

knowledge, than of making way for the whole Bible, where there was nothing but idolatry.

You are to add to this, that, whatever the likelihood that the Jew would reject Christianity on its first publication, it was a likelihood which diminished with every year that rolled away; inasmuch as every year, which brought no other Messiah, swelled the demonstration that Jesus was the Christ. It is not to be explained, on any of the principles to which we ordinarily recur in accounting for infidelity, why the Jews persisted in rejecting Jesus, when the time had long passed which themselves fixed for Messiah's appearing. Their Prophecies had clearly determined that Christ would come, whilst the second Temple was standing, and at the close of seventy weeks from the termination of the Babylonish captivity. But when the second Temple had been long even with the ground, and the seventy weeks, on every possible computation, had long ago terminated, the Jews, we might have thought, would have been compelled to admit, either that Messiah had come, or that their expectation was vain, and that no deliverer would appear. There seemed no alternative, if they rejected Jesus of Nazareth, but the rejecting their own Scriptures. So that, we can have no hesitation in affirming, that the continued infidelity, like the continued separation, of the Jews, is wholly inexplicable, unless referred to the appointment and judgment of God. We can no more account, on any common principles, for their persisting in expecting a Redeemer, when the predictions, on which they rest, manifestly pertain

to a long-departed age, than for their retaining all their national peculiarities, when they have been for Centuries "without a King, and without a Prince, and without a sacrifice." In both cases they accomplish, and that too most signally, the Prophecies of Christ—their house being left unto them desolate, and a judicial blindness having settled on their understanding.

And never, therefore, should we meet a Jew, without feeling that we meet the strongest witness for the truth of our religion. I know not how those, who are proof against all other testimony, can withstand that furnished by the condition of the Jews. They may have their doubts as to the performance of the miracles recorded in the writings of Evangelists; but here is a miracle, wrought before their eyes, and which ceases not to be miracle, because long continued. We call it miracle, because altogether contrary to what we had reason to expect, and not to be explained on mere natural principles. That the Jews have not ceased to be Jews; that, though scattered over the world, domesticated in every land, at one time, hunted by persecution and ground down by oppression, at another, allowed every privilege and placed on a footing with the natives of the soil, there has been a proved impossibility of wearing away their distinguishing characteristics, and confounding them with any other tribe—is not this marvellous? That, moreover, throughout their long exile from their own land, they have held fast the Scriptures which prove their hopes vain, and appealed to Prophets, who, if any thing better than deceivers, accuse



them of the worst crime, and convict them of the worst madness—we affirm of this, that it is a prodigy without equal in all the registered wonders which have been known on our earth: and I want nothing more to assure me that Christ came from God, and that he had a superhuman power of inspecting distant times, than the evidence vouchsafed, when I turn from surveying the once chosen people, and hear the Redeemer declaring, in his last discourse in the Temple, that their house should be left unto them desolate, and that a moral darkness should long cloud their understanding.

But we have now, in the third and last place, to consider what our text affirms of the future conversion of this unbelieving people. We have already insisted on the fact, that, in delivering the words under review, Christ was concluding his public ministrations, and that they could not, therefore, have been accomplished in events, which occurred whilst he was yet upon earth. Yet they manifestly contain a prediction, that, at some time or another, the Jews would be willing to hail him as Messiah. In saying, “ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,” Christ undoubtedly implied that the Jews should again see him, but not till prepared to give him their allegiance. We referred you to the Psalm, in which this exclamation occurs, that you might be certified as to its amounting to an acknowledgment of the Messiah. So that, on every account, we seem warranted in assuming, that, whilst announcing the misery which the Jews were fast

bringing on themselves, and the protracted infidelity to which they would be consigned. Christ also announced that a time would come, when the veil would be taken from their hearts, and they would delightedly receive the very being they were then about to crucify.

Such is the great event for which we yet look, and with which stands associated all that is most glorious in the dominion of Christianity. We know not with what eyes those men can read Prophecy, who discover not in its announcements the final restoration and conversion of the Jews. It is useless to attempt to resolve into figurative language, or to explain by a purely spiritual interpretation, predictions which seem to assert the reinstatement of the exiles in the land of their fathers, and their becoming the chief preachers of the religion, which they have so long laboured to bring into contempt. These predictions are inseparably bound up with others, which refer to their dispersion and unbelief; so that, if you spiritualize any one, you must spiritualize the whole. And since every word has had a literal accomplishment, so far as the dispersion and unbelief are concerned, how can we doubt that every word will have also a literal accomplishment, so far as the restoration and conversion are concerned? If the event had proved the predicted dispersion to be figurative, the event, in all probability, would prove also the predicted restoration to be figurative. But, so long as we find the two foretold in the same sentence, with no intimation that they are not to apply to both the same rule of

interpretation, we seem bound to expect, either in both cases a literal fulfilment, or in both a spiritual; and since in the one instance the fulfilment has been undoubtedly literal, have we not every reason for concluding that it will be literal in the other? "

We believe then of the nation of Israel, that it has not been cast off for ever, that not for ever shall Jerusalem sit desolate, mourning her banished ones, and trodden down by the Gentiles. We believe, according to the declaration of Isaiah, that there shall come a day, when "the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." We believe, according to the magnificent imagery of the same evangelical Prophet, that a voice will yet say to the prostrate nation and city, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their Kings shall minister unto thee; for in my wrath I smote thee; but in my favour have I had mercy on thee." We know not by what mighty impulse, nor at what mysterious signal, the scattered tribes shall arise from the mountains and vallies and islands of the earth, and hasten towards the land which God promised to Abraham and his seed. We cannot divine what instrumentality will be brought to bear on mankind, when God shall "say to the North, give up, and to the South, keep not back; bring my

sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." But we are sure, that, whatever the means employed to gather home the wanderers, they shall flow into Judea from every district of the globe; they shall fly as "the doves to their windows;" and the waste and desolate places become "too narrow by reason of the inhabitants."

And when God's hand shall have been lifted up to the Gentiles, compelling them to bring his sons in their arms, and his daughters on their shoulders; when marching thousands shall have crossed the confines of Palestine, and pitched their tents in plains which the Jordan waters; then will there be a manifestation of the Christ, and then a conversion of the unbelieving. We have but few, and those obscure, notices of this august consummation. We may perhaps gather, from the predictions of Ezekiel and Daniel, that, when the Jews shall have resettled themselves in Judea, they will be attacked by an Antichristian confederacy; that certain potentates will combine, lead their armies to the holy land, and seek to plunder and exterminate the reinstated people. And the struggle will be vehement; for it is declared in the last Chapter of the Prophecies of Zechariah, "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and half of the city shall go forth into captivity." But at this crisis, when the Antichristian powers seem on the point of triumphing over the Jews, the Lord, we are told, shall visibly interpose, and turn the tide of battle. "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the

mount of Olives." It was from the mount of Olives that Jesus ascended, when he had gloriously completed our Redemption. And whilst the Apostles "looked stedfastly towards Heaven, as he went up," there stood by them two men in white apparel, which told them that "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into Heaven." There was here a clear prophecy that Christ should return personally to the earth, and that, too, in like manner as he departed. And it may be one point of similarity between the departure and the return, that, as he went up from the mount of Olives, so, as Zechariah predicts, it shall be on the mount of Olives he descends. Then shall he be seen and known by the Jewish people. Then shall the hearts of this people, which had been previously moved, it may be, to the seeking the God of their fathers, though not to the acknowledging the crucified Messiah, sink within them at the view of the being, whom their ancestors pierced, and whom themselves had blasphemed. They shall recognize in him their long-expected Christ, and, throwing away every remnant of infidelity, and full of remorse and godly contrition, shall fall down before him, and supplicate for forgiveness, and tender their allegiance.

This we believe to be the time referred to by Christ in the prophecy of our text. Then will the nation be prepared to exclaim, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Then will the period, which God, in his right

their vengeance, hath appointed for the desolation  
 of their house, be brought to its close; "the times  
 of the Gentiles" will be completed, and the Ju-  
 bilee year of this Creation will commence. Until  
 the Jews, with one heart and one voice, shall  
 utter the welcome of our text, we are taught  
 to expect no general diffusion of Christianity, no-  
 thing which shall approach to that complete man-  
 nering of the globe with righteousness and peace,  
 which Prophets have described in their most fer-  
 vid strains. But the uttering this welcome by  
 the reinstated Israelites, shall be as the blast of  
 the silver trumpets which ushered in the Jubi-  
 lee of old. The sound shall be heard on every  
 shore. The east and the west, the north and the  
 south, shall echo back the peal, and all nations  
 and tribes and tongues shall join in proclaiming  
 blessed "the King of Kings and Lord of Lords."  
 Jerusalem, "her walls Salvation and her gates  
 praise," shall be erected into the Metropolis of  
 the regenerated earth; and she shall send forth,  
 in every direction, the preachers of the "one  
 Mediator between God and man;" and rapidly  
 shall all error, and all false doctrine, and all su-  
 perstition, and all opposition, give way before  
 these mighty Missionaries; till, at length, the sun,  
 in his circuit round this globe, shall shine upon  
 no habitations but those of disciples of Christ, and  
 behold no spectacle but that of a rejoicing mul-  
 titude, walking in the love of the Lord our  
 Redeemer.

Such, we believe, is the prophetic delineation  
 of what shall occur at the second Advent of Christ.

And if there were great cause why Jesus should weep over Jerusalem, as he thought on the infidelity of her children, and marked the long train of calamities which pressed rapidly onwards, there is abundant reason why we, upon whom are fallen the ends of the world, should look with hope to the hill of Zion, and expect, in gladness of spirit, the speedy dawning of bright days on the deserted and desecrated Judea. If we have at heart the advance of Christianity, we shall be much in prayer for the conversion of the Jews. "Ye that make mention of the Lord," saith the Prophet Isaiah, "keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." I have more than sympathy with the Jews as a people chastened for the sin of their ancestors: I have an indistinct feeling of reverence and awe, as knowing them reserved for the most glorious allotments. It is not their sordidness, their degradation, nor their impiety—and much less is it their suffering—which can make me forget either the vast debt we owe them, or the splendid station which they have yet to assume. That my Redeemer was a Jew, that his Apostles were Jews, that Jews preserved for us the sacred oracles, that Jews first published the tidings of Salvation, that the diminishing of the Jews was the riches of the Gentiles—I were wanting in common gratitude, if, in spite of all this, I were conscious of no yearnings of heart towards the exiles and wanderers. But, asks St Paul, "if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the

receiving of them be but life from the dead?" And if indeed the universal reign of Christ cannot be introduced, until the Jews are brought, like Paul their great type, to preach the faith which now they despise, where can be our sincerity in putting up continually the prayer, "thy Kingdom come," if we have no longing for the home-gathering of the scattered tribes, no earnestness in supplication that the veil may be taken from the heart of the Israelite?

In proportion as we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ," we shall grow in the desire that the Redeemer's Sovereignty may be more widely and visibly extended. And as this desire increases, our thoughts will turn to Jerusalem, to the scenes which witnessed Christ's humiliation, and which have also to witness his triumphs. Dear to us will be every mountain and every valley; but not more dear, because once hallowed by the footsteps of the man of sorrows, than because yet to be irradiated by the magnificent presence of the King of Kings. Dear will be Lebanon with its cedars, and Jordan with its waters; but not more dear, because associated with departed glories, than because the trees have to rejoice, and "the floods to clap their hands," before the Lord, as he cometh down in pomp to his Kingdom. Dear will be the city, as we gaze upon it in its scathed and wasted estate; but not more dear, because Jesus sojourned there, and suffered there, and wept there bitter tears, than because Jerusalem hath yet to be "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem



in the hand of her God." We bid you, therefore, examine well, whether you assign the Jew his Scriptural place in the economy of Redemption, and whether you give him his due share in your Intercessions with your Maker. You owe him much; yea, vastly more than you can ever compute. The branches were broken off; and we, being wild olive trees, were grafted in amongst them. But the natural branches shall be again grafted into their own olive-tree. And when they are thus grafted, then—and who will not long, who will not pray, for such result?—the seed, which was less, when sown, than all the seeds in the earth, shall grow suddenly into a plant of unrivalled stature and efflorescence; the whole globe shall be canopied by the far-spreading boughs, and the fowls of the air shall lodge under its shadow.

I have only to add, that, as you leave the Church, you will be asked to prove that you do indeed care for the Jews, by subscribing liberally towards a Society which devotes all its energies to the attempting their conversion. I have indeed spoken in vain, if the event shall prove that you refuse this Society your aid, or give it only in scant measure. And it is not I who appeal to you. The memory of a great and good man\* appeals to you. The Society for the Conversion of the Jews was the favourite Society of that admirable and lamented person, who, for so many years, laboured in the ministry in this town, and who can hardly be forgotten here for generations

\* The Reverend Charles Simeon.

to come. In preaching for this Society, I redeem a promise which I made to him, when my duties brought me last year to this place. I obey his wish, I comply with his request. And it cannot be that you will fail to embrace gladly an opportunity of shewing your respect for so eminent a servant of God, one who spent and was spent, that he might guide you to Heaven. You might erect to him a costly monument; you might grave his virtues on the brass, and cause the marble to assume a living shape, and bend mournfully over his ashes. But be ye well assured, that, if his glorified spirit be yet conscious of what passes on this earth, it would be no pleasure to him to see that you gathered into solemn processions to honour his obsequies, and reared, in token of your love, the stately cenotaph, compared with what he would derive from beholding your zeal, in gathering into the Christian fold "the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

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*Also by the same Author,*

Four Sermons preached before the University of Cambridge; to which are added, Two Sermons preached at the Evening Lecture, at Great St Mary's Church, during the month of February, 1836. Third Edition, 8vo., 5s. boards.









